

Earley St Peter's C of E VA Primary School

Church Road, Earley, Reading, Berkshire RG6 1EY

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| Inspection dates | 26–27 April 2016 |
| Overall effectiveness | Good |
| Effectiveness of leadership and management | Good |
| Quality of teaching, learning and assessment | Good |
| Personal development, behaviour and welfare | Good |
| Outcomes for pupils | Good |
| Early years provision | Good |
| Overall effectiveness at previous inspection | Requires improvement |

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- Across the school, pupils make good progress in English and mathematics. They attain well. Pupils' writing is of a particularly high standard.
- The headteacher leads the school well. She has successfully ensured that it has become good, after many years below this level.
- Since the last inspection, governors have continued effectively to support and challenge the school to improve and become good.
- Senior leaders work closely with the staff to ensure that teaching is consistently effective across the school. They address any significant weaknesses quickly.
- Pupils make a good start in the early years. There is particularly strong provision in the nursery. Early years staff work very well with parents.
- The school evaluates itself accurately in almost all respects. It plans further improvements aptly.
- This is a friendly school, with high aspirations. Parents are understandably pleased with it.
- Pupils consistently behave well in lessons and around the school. They are carefully looked after and feel confident, happy and safe.
- Pupils who have special educational needs achieve well. Disadvantaged pupils also achieve highly.
- The school supports those pupils who speak English as an additional language securely. They learn English quickly and make good progress.
- Pupils enjoy a broad curriculum, with many interesting and exciting elements. This includes residential visits, sports and arts events, moments of reflection and learning outside the classroom.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- The teaching of phonics (letters and the sounds that they make) is not systematically organised in the transition from Reception into Year 1.
- The subjects beyond English and mathematics are not yet taught excellently. The hard work of subject leaders is not as influential as it could be.
- In key stage 2, the teaching of reading skills does not have high enough priority.
- In a few lessons, sometimes small numbers of pupils are not quite sure what to do, or their particular needs are not closely met. They then stop work, waiting too long for help.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that subject leaders all have the knowledge, confidence and clear accountability needed to lead their subjects fully effectively.
- Ensure that pupils always understand their tasks in lessons, have the resources they need to help themselves if they are stuck or unsure, or that they receive adult help and support quickly enough.
- Improve teaching and pupils' outcomes in reading by:
 - ensuring that the systems for phonics teaching in Reception and Year 1 dovetail together systematically
 - developing pupils' higher-order reading skills, such as comprehension, more effectively in key stage 2
 - giving reading a higher profile to match that given to writing.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management is good

- The headteacher gives very clear direction. She ensures that the school is ambitious for its pupils. For these reasons, the school has improved markedly in the last few years and it continues to do so. Pupils do well at the school.
- Staff feel well motivated and engaged. Their morale and commitment are high. One member of staff wrote, 'It's clear that senior leaders always have the school's best interests at heart for any and all decisions being made.'
- Senior leaders develop teaching rigorously and systematically. This is rightly their highest priority. They have developed effective regular monitoring, staff development and coaching. The performance management of staff is carried out correctly and efficiently.
- The school evaluates itself generally accurately. This leads to senior staff identifying correct areas for further improvement. The school improvement plan is a useful working document.
- The school spends its pupil premium funding thoughtfully, evaluating its impact carefully. Overall, the pupils concerned achieve well.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are developed well. Pupils have frequent opportunities to reflect on thought-provoking questions. For example, they are asked 'What are you proud of and why?' in connection with their religious and cultural communities. In this church school, questions of faith and its importance are given high priority. Pupils are encouraged effectively to consider how they can 'be the best that they can be'.
- Pupils from all backgrounds are treated very respectfully. Any undue discrimination is firmly tackled. Pupils are well prepared for life in modern Britain.
- Pupils enjoy a broad curriculum. All subjects are appropriately taught and given suitable amounts of teaching time. Music has a high profile in the school. There are three choirs and many pupils learn instruments, particularly from the brass section.
- Sport premium funding is spent well, partly on a specialist teaching assistant, who promotes energising activities for many pupils. All pupils have opportunities to exercise and develop their physical fitness. There is a good range of local inter-school events in which St Peter's participates.
- The headteacher has worked to delegate more authority to staff and to build up their leadership skills. This has been effective, but staff still tend to refer back to the headteacher more often than may be strictly necessary.
- The experienced inclusion leader manages the provision for the pupils she supports very carefully. Her work is mainly on a day-to-day level; the more strategic work of identifying the key priorities is carried out by the headteacher.
- English and mathematics are well led and managed, as are each of the phases: early years, key stage 1 and key stage 2. Leaders give particularly high emphasis to writing which, consequently, is better developed than reading. Leaders have worked successfully with staff to improve and sharpen phonics teaching. However, there is no specific link between the teaching of phonics in Reception and that in Year 1, so it is not evident that Year 1 pupils continue right from where they left off the previous year.
- Leaders of the subjects other than English and mathematics offer useful advice to staff and choose new resources. They arrange worthwhile events, including science days or sports fixtures. They usefully encourage subject-specific aspects of teaching (such as musical composition or scientific experimentation). They report to governors. This is all valuable work; every subject has an enthusiastic advocate. But these leaders are not yet quite sure how to develop their subjects to the very highest standard. They know broadly how well pupils are doing in their subjects, but this knowledge is not sharp. Their accountability for pupils' outcomes is limited.
- The local authority provides suitable, and rightly reducing, support. The diocese also is helpful.
- **The governance of the school**
 - The governing body is well organised. It carries out its full range of duties effectively. Governors are active and highly committed. They undertake appropriate training. The chair ensures carefully that governors have, or can develop, the particular skills needed. She also ensures that individual governors can grow in their roles, and take on increased responsibilities, such as chairing a committee.
 - Governors challenge the senior staff suitably. Over the past three years, they have been very determined to see the school improve. They have effectively overseen the school's journey to being

good for the first time. However, they tend to rely heavily on, and quickly accept, reports from the headteacher. They do not always ask the kind of 'follow-up' questions that would keep her even more on her toes.

- Governors visit the school regularly and usefully. Nevertheless, the first-hand information they gather from these visits does not lead to the very sharp questioning and still higher expectations which could promote the school's journey to outstanding.
- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. The school has a good culture of safety and safeguarding. Staff are trained regularly and appropriately. They know what to do should the need arise. Suitable checks are made on adults when they are recruited and as needed. School records are carefully kept and updated. Staff assess risks suitably. Any pupils who are vulnerable or at any kind of known risk are looked after well, often in useful collaboration with other services. The school works closely and effectively as appropriate with parents, who generally comment on this favourably.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good

- In English and mathematics, teachers show strong levels of subject knowledge. This means they usually challenge their pupils well. Teachers and teaching assistants give clear explanations. Time is usually well used in lessons. Pupils feel well served by the adults in school. One said they are 'brilliant teachers who help us, with a sense of humour'.
- Adults are very good at questioning pupils to improve their thinking. As part of a whole-school development, they are also developing effective skills in offering pupils immediate feedback in lessons, helping them to improve their work there and then. For instance, in a Year 4 lesson, a teaching assistant very skilfully encouraged a pupil to think for herself about how she could immediately enrich her writing. The pupil added affecting phrases like 'frantically shake' to her work on Pompeii and Vesuvius.
- Teachers assess their pupils and their needs well. They give pupils ambitious targets in English and mathematics. For the most part, staff provide work which is appropriately suited to pupils' different needs. Those who speak English as an additional language are well supported. Pupils with particularly high ability are generally very well challenged in English and mathematics lessons.
- In Year 3 mathematics lessons, pupils were helpfully given different multiplication sums to work out, depending on their needs. They were given good opportunities to explain their thinking and how they had resolved any difficulties. Staff helpfully demonstrated some key techniques.
- Homework is useful, well organised and consistently managed. Parents and pupils like this.
- Reading has a lower profile than writing. Teaching of reading is not quite as strong as that for writing.
- In the subjects beyond the core of English and mathematics, teaching is effective, but it lacks the sharpness and depth seen in the core subjects. For example, in practical geography and science lessons, pupils engaged well but the work was not as challenging as it could have been, especially for pupils who completed the tasks quickly.
- In some lessons, when pupils become stuck or unsure of what to do, especially where there are large classes, they have to wait too long to receive the particular support they need, and/or this support is not readily enough available. Occasionally, pupils get into this position when the work set is slightly too hard for them to do independently. In one lesson observed, a pupil with limited English concentrated but needed help, which was not given. As a result he could not succeed in the set writing task.
- Senior leaders are rightly encouraging staff to change tack, and move away from the plan, when pupils show they need it. Sometimes in lessons, teachers persist with their set plan when the pupils show they are ready for something different or even more challenging.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare is good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils demonstrate confidence, resilience and well-being. They are respectful of others. They are keen to discuss their learning constructively and honestly. They think about how they learn best and find that staff often accommodate their preferences.

- Pupils enjoy being helpful and taking responsibility in the school from the youngest age, as school councillors, 'lead learners' and 'eco leaders', for example.
- The school has effective, well-managed links with external agencies, to support pupils when needed.
- Pupils feel safe in school. They can explain simply how they avoid harm, including when they are using the school swimming pool and the internet. The school teaches them well about safety.
- In general, pupils from Pakistani heritage do not attend school as well as those from other groups. The school has found it difficult to engage fully with some families. This has some adverse effects on the progress and well-being of certain pupils. The school is considering how it might find ways to welcome and connect more deeply with this community to help alleviate any problems.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Pupils are polite, happy and very friendly. They enjoy being in school. Pupils from all different backgrounds work and play happily together.
- Pupils generally behave very well and attentively in lessons. They listen carefully to adults and each other. They settle to tasks independently, right from the early years. They take care of equipment. They are supportive of each other. They move around the school safely.
- Pupils who spoke with inspectors seemed surprised to be asked if there was any bullying in the school. They consider it to be very rare. This accords with the school's records. However, pupils said that sometimes there is unkind behaviour, but that this is sorted out by staff.
- One pupil said, of the school and playground, 'We bond really well with everyone around us. We have good spatial awareness because of the tight environment!' However, some parents and staff pointed out occasional instances of rough playground behaviour, which are not fully dealt with by staff. Inspectors also observed such behaviour at lunchtime; this was not malicious but nor was it quickly stopped.
- The rate of attendance is average. The school has appropriate procedures for encouraging good attendance. Some absences are caused by extended visits abroad, though the instance of this is reducing.
- The rate of pupil exclusion is consistently very low.

Outcomes for pupils

are good

- Consistently through the school, pupils from all groups make good progress, and attain well, in English and mathematics. Pupils' writing is of a particularly good standard. They write with interest and imagination, appropriate to their age. They use grammar, spelling and punctuation rules with increasing accuracy and present their work tidily.
- In one lesson, pupils enjoyed writing quickly several descriptions of scenes in photographs, including similes, metaphors and personification. Pupils used vivid descriptive language, such as 'like a deserted vegetable patch'. Pupils of all abilities and needs were well supported to succeed in these tasks.
- Pupils with notably high ability in English or mathematics achieve well. Many pupils reach high standards in these subjects. This applies as much to pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds, or who speak English as an additional language, as it does to others. Pupils who are learning to speak English make quick progress in building their vocabulary and in using grammar correctly.
- Pupils who have special educational needs or disability make as good progress as their classmates.
- In 2015, Year 6 pupils attained well in their national tests in English and mathematics. Results were above average. Pupils fared better in writing than in reading. The small number of disadvantaged pupils did well, reaching standards above the national average for all pupils. Pupils from all groups made good progress.
- There is a trend of improvement in national assessments in key stage 1 in the past few years. Year 2 pupils reached above average attainment in reading, writing and mathematics in 2015. In particular, pupils did well in writing. Boys and girls generally did equally well. However, disadvantaged pupils did not do quite as well as their peers.
- In the phonics screening check of 2015, Year 1 pupils did not perform well. Boys' results were weaker than those of girls. This was disappointing as the same pupils had done well in their assessments when they were in Reception the year before. They knew their individual letter sounds well but did much less well when reading combinations of different letter sounds. The school has taken action to improve this, which is still being evaluated. Key stage 1 pupils now show better knowledge of sounds in combination.
- Pupils achieve well in reading but not as highly as they do in writing, especially in key stage 2. Pupils'

higher-order reading skills, such as comprehension, are not quite as well developed as they might be. The Year 4 pupils who read to inspectors did so accurately and with good expression. They enjoyed their books. However, they were sometimes a little unsure of some aspects of the plot or meaning. They change their books, and read at school and at home, irregularly.

- The school does not yet have reliable information about how well pupils do in the subjects beyond English and mathematics. However, inspectors noted some positive outcomes. In an assembly, pupils from Years 1 to 6 sang a hymn accurately and worshipfully. There is evidence of valuable learning about World War II, the Peak District, modern and earlier artists and in several science topics, for example.
- Pupils are helpfully supported as they move from one year group or key stage to the next. They are well equipped to go to secondary school.

Early years provision

is good

- The early years provision is well led and managed. Staff in the Nursery and Reception classes work closely together and learn from each other. They also work effectively with other schools. Consequently, children have a rich, productive experience and learn well.
- In 2015, most children reached a good level of development at the end of the Reception year from broadly average starting points. They were well prepared for Year 1. This showed further improvement on 2014, where the outcomes were also strong. The current children are also achieving well. Children entitled to pupil premium funding achieve very well.
- The provision and learning in the Nursery are particularly strong. The staff there have considerable expertise and experience. One of the things they do especially well is to use immediate events to draw out children's learning. For example, when children were practising initial letter sounds, some of them independently developed this and started to include middle letters in their names. The teacher quickly included this in her teaching. Thus pupils who were ready for it took their learning forward quickly. Staff use real data, such as the number of children present, to develop children's counting and numeracy skills. When it unexpectedly snowed, staff instantly encouraged the children to think about cold, heat, the sun and melting.
- In the Reception classes, the practice is good and improving. Children enjoy a range of constructive activities. In one example, children tried hard when practising badminton techniques. They learned how to follow the shuttlecock with their eyes and held the racquet correctly. Those who found this difficult first time were given strong encouragement by staff and improved their skills.
- Children in early years are carefully and accurately assessed by adults. These assessments are well used to plan appropriate activities across all the different areas of learning. Staff also take account in planning of the children's interests. A recent topic on pirates was one example.
- The indoor and outdoor areas are well organised and stimulating. Resources are readily accessible to the children, so that they can make choices and take responsibility.
- There is a particularly strong partnership with parents and carers. Parents contribute profitably to the assessments of their children. Home learning books are widely and helpfully used. Regular 'stay and play' sessions, including one especially for dads, are valuable. Parents attend information sessions in good numbers.
- Children behave well. They are happy and keen to talk about what they are learning and exploring. They show concern for each other. They learn to concentrate well on their tasks. Nevertheless, in Reception more than Nursery, children sometimes move too quickly between activities, before they have completed their chosen tasks.
- Staff teach phonics well. Pupils apply their phonics knowledge when speaking and writing. However, there is not a clearly arranged transition to phonics teaching in Year 1.
- Staff talk with, and question, children carefully. This helps the pupils to think more deeply about what they are doing. It also helps pupils who are learning English considerably. However, occasionally staff in Reception classes miss opportunities to develop children's learning when they talk to the children superficially rather than in depth.
- Children are kept very safe. Their good health is promoted well. Safeguarding procedures are well organised, as in the rest of the school.

School details

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| Unique reference number | 110009 |
| Local authority | Wokingham |
| Inspection number | 10002287 |

This inspection was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

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| Type of school | Primary |
| School category | Voluntary aided |
| Age range of pupils | 3-11 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number of pupils on the school roll | 532 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair | Jane Peters |
| Headteacher/Principal/Teacher in charge | Hester Wooller |
| Telephone number | 01189 261657 |
| Website | www.earley-st-peters.wokingham.sch.uk |
| Email address | admin@earley-st-peters.wokingham.sch.uk |
| Date of previous inspection | 17–18 December 2013 |

Information about this school

- This large church-aided primary school, with a part-time nursery, serves the Reading suburb of Earley. In each year group from Reception to Year 2, there are three classes. In Years 3 to 6, there are two classes per year group. The classes for older pupils are large, each with about 35 pupils.
- The largest single ethnic group is White British. About two fifths of pupils are from this background. The school has pupils from many different backgrounds. About a fifth are from Pakistani heritage, the next largest group.
- The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is above average.
- A smaller than average proportion of pupils is considered to be disadvantaged and entitled to the support of the pupil premium.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs or disability is average.
- The school meets the government's minimum standards for pupils' attainment and progress at the end of Year 6. These are known as the floor standards.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed lessons in all classes, and many subjects, some jointly with senior leaders.
- They looked at samples of pupils' work, heard pupils read, and held discussions with groups of pupils. They considered the school's assessments of pupils' academic progress.
- The inspection team met with the headteacher and senior leaders, members of staff, parents, governors and a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors evaluated important school documentation, including the school improvement plan, self-evaluations, local authority reports and minutes of meetings.
- Inspectors observed at playtimes, lunchtimes, during an assembly and as pupils moved around the school.
- The inspectors took careful note of the views of parents from 108 returns to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View. They also considered the views of pupils and staff from confidential questionnaires.

Inspection team

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| Robin Hammerton, lead inspector | Her Majesty's Inspector |
| Clare Beswick | Ofsted Inspector |
| Margaret Wolf | Ofsted Inspector |

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