

The March Church of England Primary School

Claypit Lane, Westhampnett, Chichester, West Sussex, PO18 0NU

Inspection dates 8–9 October 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	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 headteacher, well supported by the governors and all staff, has tackled weaknesses and brought about improvements in pupils' achievement.
- School leaders have sustained good teaching over a period of time so that pupils achieve well. Overall standards at the end of Key Stage 2 are above average and rising.
- Effective leadership and management are evident at all levels. Staff and governors are united in their clear vision for moving the school forward. Consequently, the school is well placed to improve even further.
- Pupils make good progress in reading, writing and mathematics. Gaps in achievement are closing for disadvantaged pupils, particularly at Key Stage 2.
- Pupils enjoy school, behave well and take pride in their school. They are very positive about learning and respond enthusiastically to the stimulating curriculum. They are kept safe and are looked after well.
- A shared set of values and strong emphasis on rights and responsibilities contribute very strongly to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- Children make good progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage. This is due to effective teaching which encourages children's curiosity and eagerness to learn.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Pupils' achievement in mathematics in Key Stage 1 is not as good as that in reading and writing.
- Teachers sometimes move on to new work too quickly before pupils have fully grasped an idea.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors visited 11 lessons. Most of these observations were conducted jointly with the headteacher. Inspectors also made a number of other short visits to classrooms.
- Inspectors heard pupils read and looked at samples of their work.
- Inspectors looked at a range of documents, including the school improvement plan and records on behaviour, safety and attendance. They also looked at information on pupils' progress, anonymised records of teachers' performance, and records of meetings held by the governing body.
- Inspectors met with pupils and teachers and spoke to parents. They also spoke to members of the governing body and a representative from the local authority.
- The views of parents were obtained through the 72 responses to the online Parent View survey. Written comments from 20 members of staff were also considered.

Inspection team

Rob Crompton, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Fiona Robinson

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is smaller than the average sized primary school. Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage attend full-time in the Reception class.
- Most pupils are of White British heritage, with under 10% from a range of minority ethnic groups. Very few pupils speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils eligible for the pupil premium is below average. The pupil premium provides additional funding for children who are in the care of the local authority or 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 broadly average. The proportion supported through school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is below average. These needs relate mainly to moderate learning difficulties.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- A new deputy headteacher and a new special educational needs coordinator were appointed in September 2014.
- The headteacher plays a leading role in supporting schools in the local school network.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise standards in mathematics in Key Stage 1 by:
 - teaching pupils to use their numeracy skills to solve mathematical problems
 - providing further opportunities for pupils to practise, consolidate and extend their mathematical skills in other subjects.
- Improve teaching by ensuring pupils fully grasp an idea before moving on to more demanding work.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are good

- The calm and determined leadership of the headteacher has been instrumental in eradicating the dip in achievement that occurred in 2012. Weaknesses in the quality of teaching and the accuracy of assessment were tackled successfully. Senior and middle leaders share the headteacher's vision for further school improvement and together they create a purposeful atmosphere conducive to learning. The recently appointed deputy headteacher and special educational needs coordinator are making an increasing contribution to school leadership.
- The school's view of its own performance is accurate and priorities for improvement are clearly identified. Governance is effective.
- The quality of teaching and pupils' progress are carefully monitored. Staff performance is well managed. Staff feel valued and morale is high. Responses to the staff survey were entirely positive. They included, 'Moving to this school has re-energised me' and 'I can't praise the school enough'.
- Productive partnerships with other schools and good support from the local authority ensure that staff, including middle managers, have access to high quality professional development.
- The school ensures that all pupils are given equal opportunities to succeed. Extra funding is used wisely. Gaps between the achievement of disadvantaged pupils and others are closing. Additional resources, staff training and specialist teaching have led to pupils' increasing participation in sporting activities that promote physical skills and a healthy lifestyle.
- Safeguarding arrangements meet statutory requirements and are highly effective. Staff are well aware of child protection and risk assessment issues. Pupils' behaviour is generally managed well, although there are some minor inconsistencies in their concentration during lessons.
- The school is working closely with partner schools to implement the new curriculum, and is now formulating a new approach to assessment, following the removal of National Curriculum levels. An appropriate emphasis on literacy and numeracy is being sustained, although opportunities for pupils to use their mathematical skills in other subjects are sometimes missed.
- The curriculum includes highly appealing topics and challenging outdoor activities. Effective use is made of the school's spacious grounds and rural location. A wide range of extra-curricular activities adds greatly to pupils' enjoyment of school.
- Links with schools in Kenya and inner London successfully promote pupils' awareness of the wider world. An emphasis on rights and responsibilities, school council elections and visits by people of different faiths and cultures prepare pupils well for life in modern Britain. These activities make an excellent contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- The governance of the school:
 - Governors are well trained and very knowledgeable about the school's strengths and weaknesses. They are fully involved in strategic planning. They are well aware of how well the school is doing compared to other schools and closely monitor the quality of teaching and the performance of staff. Governors are clear about how good teachers are rewarded and how weaknesses are tackled. Resources are well deployed and governors seek assurance that additional funding is used effectively.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Pupils have good attitudes to learning and are keen to do well. They listen carefully to instructions and co-operate well with one another when working together or sharing ideas. They understand that good behaviour helps them to do better and improve their work.
- Pupils enjoy coming to school. As a consequence, their attendance is well above the national average. They play well together in the playground and are generally calm and sensible when moving around the school. Occasionally, pupils lose concentration in lessons, particularly when they are not sure how to tackle new work.
- Pupils have a good understanding of bullying and the different forms that it can take. They say that incidents of bullying are extremely rare. Pupils from Year 5 and Year 6 showed a good understanding of how to stay safe when using the internet. The school's behaviour records show that there are very few incidents of misbehaviour.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe is outstanding. Pupils have complete trust in the school's systems

for keeping them safe, as do the vast majority of parents. Pupils are happy to talk with staff about anything they find worrying.

- The school has a positive and caring atmosphere and there are highly effective systems to help ensure that pupils stay safe and secure, including regular risk assessments. For example, pupils are supervised carefully when learning in the grounds or a local wood; at the same time, they are encouraged to assess any risks for themselves and make rational choices.
- All staff and governors are trained in safety procedures, for example in ensuring the required checks are made when appointing new staff.

The quality of teaching is good

- High expectations, underpinned by warm relationships between staff and pupils, successfully promote mature attitudes to learning. Varied tasks and the use of interesting resources engage pupils' interest so they produce a good amount of well-presented, quality work. For example, last year, the most able pupils in Year 4 typically completed five exercise books in mathematics that included a wide range of demanding tasks.
- Learning in literacy and numeracy is promoted successfully. The youngest pupils make a good start in reading, due to the systematic approach to teaching phonics (letters and the sounds they make). They are encouraged to read widely and, by Year 6, most pupils read fluently. Older pupils remarked on the link between reading and writing. One explained, 'You get to know what creative writing really is and you can use their [authors'] techniques.'
- Pupils show pride in their work. They rise to the expectation that they complete their work in class and homework tasks within the allotted time.
- Pupils' pace of learning is usually brisk because teachers' expectations are high and the work set is challenging. Occasionally, pupils are asked to move on before fully grasping an idea. Conversely, pupils, particularly in mathematics at Key Stage 1, are sometimes set tasks which reinforce their basic skills but do not challenge them to apply these skills in different contexts.
- Pupils' work is marked thoroughly so pupils know exactly how to improve their work.
- Pupils' understanding is assessed through skilful questioning and regular checks during lessons, and also by more formal tests. Good use is made of this assessment information to help ensure pupils build on their previous learning rather than go over old ground.

The achievement of pupils is good

- Pupils make good progress and generally reach average levels in reading, writing and mathematics by Year 2. There was a dip in 2012 due to the particular characteristics of the year group, but current pupils are building well on their various starting points.
- Pupils gain increasing confidence in reading unfamiliar words due to the systematic teaching of phonics. There has been a marked improvement in pupils' scores in the Year 1 phonic skills checks from 2012, when they were well below average, to 2014, when they were above the 2013¹ average.
- Recently, pupils in Key Stage 1 have not done as well in mathematics as they have in reading and writing. Although test results were similar, the school's careful analysis of assessment information shows that, although pupils' calculation skills are strong, they lack confidence in using these skills to solve mathematical problems. This issue has a high priority in the school's development planning.
- By Year 6, pupils generally reach above average standards in reading, writing and mathematics. From 2008 to 2011 assessment information shows that pupils achieved significantly above average levels. In 2012 attainment dipped to around average and the progress of the more able pupils from Key Stage 1 was below expectations.
- Determined efforts by school leaders to improve standards have borne fruit. Attainment rose in 2013, and in 2014 the school's performance was back to its previous levels. In particular, around half of the pupils reached the higher levels in reading, writing and mathematics. The picture is similar in the current Years 5 and 6 classes where the end-of-year assessments in July showed pupils had reached standards well above those typically expected of these year groups.
- Pupils are making good progress in each year group. They become increasingly confident and accurate in spelling, punctuation and grammar, and older pupils routinely use these skills in their day-to-day written

¹ National assessment data for 2014 had not been published at the time of the inspection.

work. Year 6 pupils confidently tackle a wide range of mathematical activities, including calculating equivalent fractions and decimals, and drawing line graphs to interpret algebraic expressions.

- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs make good progress. They benefit from the school's highly effective approach to supporting pupils and their families.
- The gap between the achievement of disadvantaged pupils and other pupils nationally is closing rapidly. In almost all year groups, these pupils are progressing at similar rates to other pupils. This is due to the effective support by staff, and the judicious use of extra funding to provide additional opportunities and resources. In 2014, the few disadvantaged pupils in Year 6 outperformed this group nationally (based on 2013 national levels) and their peers in the school. Their attainment was higher by the equivalent of over a term.
- The most able pupils benefit from specialist tuition and challenging homework which helps them to reach their potential. In 2014, the proportion of pupils reaching the higher Level 3 at Key Stage 1 matched the 2013 national levels, indicating good progress from their Year 1 entry levels. In Year 6, an above average proportion of pupils reached the higher Level 5 in reading, writing and mathematics; three pupils reached Level 6 in mathematics in 2013 and one did so in 2014.

The early years provision

is good

- Children benefit from a rich and stimulating environment. They quickly learn to choose activities which develop their social and academic skills. They behave well and are kept safe. Effective teaching ensures children progress well. Levels of attainment by the end of Reception vary from year to year. In recent years, standards have steadily risen, with most children reaching a good level of development last year.
- Imaginative curriculum themes stimulate children's curiosity and engage them in a wide range of useful activities. For example, there was a buzz of purposeful activity as children responded to the question, 'Why can't I have chocolate for breakfast?' A child pulling a toy cat towards the 'dental surgery' set up in the classroom explained, 'She's been eating chocolate and needs her teeth cleaned!'
- Effective leadership by the recently appointed Early Years Foundation Stage manager has led to improvements in the provision. Further opportunities for children to develop independence and increase their communication skills have been introduced.
- Resources are varied and appealing. Just a few weeks after starting school, children were eager to find things out and, for the most part, were confident enough to try things out for themselves. Adults support children's learning subtly without spoon-feeding. During early morning activities, for example, adults worked alongside children, prompting their thinking and comments, as they searched the sand tray for letters in their own names, played a phonic game on the computer and explored how to make a floor robot go in different directions.

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	126031
Local authority	West Sussex
Inspection number	443867

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	204
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Heather Sellors
Headteacher	Peter Edgington
Date of previous school inspection	13–14 October 2010
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