

Wisbech St Mary Church of England Primary School

Church Road, Wisbech St Mary, Cambridgeshire PE13 4RJ

Inspection dates 18–19 November 2015

Overall effectiveness **Inadequate**

Effectiveness of leadership and management	Requires improvement
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Requires improvement
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Requires improvement
Outcomes for pupils	Inadequate
Early years provision	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an inadequate school

- Standards of reading, writing and mathematics are low across the school.
- Despite recent improvements in the rate of progress that pupils are making, too many pupils are still working at a level which is below that expected for their age.
- The quality of teaching is inconsistent. A legacy of poor teaching in the past and staffing changes has impacted significantly on the rate of pupils' learning.
- Key leaders are at an early stage of developing their skills.
- Pupils do not adopt positive attitudes to their learning in some classes. This is closely linked to the quality of teaching in these classrooms.
- An external review of the governing body resulted in considerable changes. These are at an early stage of implementation.
- Pupils do not take sufficient care over the quality of their work in some classes.

The school has the following strengths

- The headteacher, who has worked at the school since January 2015, has made a positive impact on all of the school's work.
- The teaching staff, including teaching assistants, have rallied under the headteacher's leadership and are now determined to make things better.
- The quality of learning in the Early Years Foundation Stage is good. Children get off to a good start in the Reception class because of good teaching and accurate assessment.
- Pupils' behaviour, which was of concern in the recent past, has improved. Pupils confirm this and say that, in most classes, their learning is rarely disrupted.

Full report

In accordance with the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires significant improvement, because it is performing significantly less well than it might in all the circumstances reasonably be expected to perform.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching so that it is consistently good in all classrooms.
- Raise standards in reading, writing and mathematics across the school.
- Ensure that all pupils adopt positive attitudes to their learning.
- Develop the skills of recently appointed leaders, including governors.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management requires improvement

- Until September 2015, the headteacher was working without the support of a full-time senior leadership team. The scale of the task facing the school's leadership required a larger team, which was appointed in September 2015. This new senior leadership team has yet to develop fully and have the impact that is needed to accelerate progress.
- Leaders are gaining an understanding of precisely what the school needs to do in order to improve. The list is a long one, as there is much to do. Actions taken by the headteacher, and increasingly by her senior team, have already impacted positively. Pupil progress, which was previously very slow, has improved and is now in line with expected rates.
- Following her appointment in January 2015, the headteacher quickly established the areas where improvement was most needed. A new approach to behaviour was introduced along with training for staff. This quickly reduced the amount of disruption in lessons, enabling teachers to concentrate on promoting learning.
- The curriculum has been reviewed recently and is now much more interesting for pupils. The topics that they study are designed to capture pupils' excitement and this is beginning to have an impact on how pupils, especially the older ones, regard learning.
- The school promotes the development of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development through its curriculum alongside visits, visitors and clubs. The school is part of its community and seeks opportunities, like Bonfire Night, to celebrate together. The promotion of British values is planned within the curriculum and is supported by the work of the school council.
- The impact of additional funding for disadvantaged pupils is now closely monitored. Previously, too little was known about the effectiveness of the interventions that were funded by this extra money. Now, leaders have started to analyse the cost-effectiveness of each intervention, although this is at an early stage of development.
- Physical education (PE) and sport premium funding is targeted at raising the quality of PE teaching in the school, as well as increasing participation rates in games at playtimes through play leaders. The latter has clearly been a success as pupils related the difference that it has made to the way that they play.
- The headteacher uses a range of information, including assessment information, to understand the quality of teaching. She has brought about improvements in teaching through a review of the way that teachers plan lessons, how they mark pupils' work and how accurately they are able to assess progress.
- Staff were keen to explain to inspectors the positive impact that the new headteacher has had on morale, ethos and enthusiasm within school. One teacher, who admitted being ready to resign when the headteacher joined the school, expressed her delight in deciding to stay and be part of a success story. Teaching assistants spoke with similar positivity about the impact that the headteacher had made to their work, and how they now felt much more valued.
- The local authority has provided significant amounts of valuable support for the school in the recent past. This is now reducing as the headteacher is demonstrating the capacity to improve the school.
- The school is a caring place. Leaders model an ethos which places pupils at the centre of their work and this is permeating the rest of the school.
- A very small number of parents responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, during the inspection. A few of those who did respond were concerned about the changes in staffing. Others were very positive about the school's new direction and leadership. The parents that inspectors spoke to at the start of the school day were all very positive about the recent changes.
- **The governance of the school**
 - Governors are increasing their understanding of how the school works on a daily basis through more regular visits. They now undertake regular 'learning walks' alongside senior leaders and report back to colleagues.
 - The governing body responded to the outcomes of a recent external review and made changes to its membership and the way that it operates.
 - Governors now check that performance management systems are fully in place to ensure that leaders hold teachers to account for the quality of their work.
 - Governors are aware of how additional funding is spent on improving the outcomes for disadvantaged pupils and are starting to monitor the impact of this spending more effectively.

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment requires improvement

- Teaching is inconsistent across the school. In Year 3 and Year 4, teaching is less effective than in other year groups. This is because of changes in staffing and teachers' low expectations of what pupils can achieve.
- The basic skills of mathematics and writing have not been systematically taught. As a result, teachers in Year 5 and Year 6 are trying to make up for lost time and are focusing on things that should have been learned much earlier. This was most clearly apparent in mathematics books in Year 6, where pupils were able to cope with problems involving addition and subtraction, but were struggling with multiplication and division – concepts that should have been embedded in earlier years.
- Teachers are not routinely expecting or requiring high standards of presentation and handwriting. Handwriting lessons are now in place, but the quality of pupils' work is far too variable and some of it lacks care and pride.
- In most classes, pupils are now making expected progress because teaching is better organised than in the past. The full curriculum is being taught, with teachers often providing interesting lessons for pupils to learn about their topic or science work.
- A new and improved assessment system, introduced in the summer term 2015, is now being used throughout the school. This is enabling teachers to have a much better understanding of how well individual pupils are progressing. The data arising from this information is leading to more targeted support for pupils and groups of pupils.
- Where teaching has improved significantly, pupils are demonstrating real enthusiasm for their work. For example, in a mathematics lesson observed in Year 5, pupils were investigating problems and were engrossed in their work – discussing their solutions and learning from one another. Their work was of a high standard and they were reluctant to finish the lesson.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare requires improvement

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare requires improvement.
- In lower Key Stage 2, pupils have not yet developed an understanding of how important their education is to their futures. These pupils commonly cite breaktimes and lunchtimes as their favourite part of the school day, in contrast with older pupils who are increasingly excited about their lessons. This influences the pace of pupils' learning in this part of the school; too much time is spent talking about things that are not associated with learning when the opportunity arises.
- Pupils say that they feel safe in school. They value the care that teachers and teaching assistants show for them and know that, if required, they can turn to a member of staff for help or support.
- Pupils are aware of what bullying is and the different forms that it takes. They report that it is rare and, when it does arise, it is dealt with swiftly. The parents that responded to the school's own questionnaire were equally positive about this.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement.
- Pupils in some classes do not consistently adopt positive attitudes to their learning, are easily distracted and do not present their work carefully enough. In these classes, the standard of teaching is not good enough and the tasks and activities that pupils are asked to do are often uninspiring.
- Pupils conduct themselves well around the school. They are polite and welcoming. Their relationships with staff and with one another are good and based on the school's ethos.
- The standard of pupils' behaviour at breaktimes and lunchtimes has improved significantly over recent months, when action was taken to remove play equipment that was leading to conflict and also causing too many minor accidents. As a replacement, play leaders are now employed to encourage and lead pupils in games and activities. Pupils are overwhelmingly supportive of these changes.

- Pupils' attendance improved last year and was in line with national levels. Current attendance continues to reflect this positive change. The school day was changed in the summer term to ensure that no learning time was wasted. Pupils are now in school, ready to learn when their lessons begin and punctuality is very good.

Outcomes for pupils

are inadequate

- Standards in Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 have been in decline since the previous inspection. Levels of attainment in Year 2 and Year 6 were broadly in line with national averages in reading, writing and mathematics until 2014, when they dipped significantly. This decline was reflected in the 2015 results, when standards worsened further, particularly in Key Stage 2 where they were exceptionally low in mathematics and writing.
- Pupils have made far too little progress between Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 in mathematics and writing. Current pupils have too many gaps in their understanding and large proportions of each year group are working at a level which is below that expected for their age.
- The most-able pupils are not realising their potential. This was starkly demonstrated in the Key Stage 2 results in 2015. No pupils gained a Level 5 in writing and only one gained this level in mathematics. Nationally, the proportion of pupils reaching this level is just over one third.
- The attainment of disadvantaged pupils was much lower than that of other pupils in writing last year. On average they were around two years below their peers at the end of Key Stage 2. In reading, the gap was close to one year and in mathematics there was very little difference.
- The progress of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is similar to other pupils. Their recent achievement has been too low, but is now accelerating as interventions are more closely monitored and more precisely assigned to individual pupils. The use of teaching assistants to provide these interventions is improving as training and closer teamwork among staff are developing.
- The school's assessment information, moderated by inspectors, shows signs of an improving picture. Pupils in almost all year groups are now making at least expected progress. In Year 2 and Year 5, pupils are making accelerated progress in mathematics.
- The progress of pupils in Year 1 indicates that the positive start that they made in the Early Years Foundation Stage is being sustained. Pupils' understanding of mathematics and their writing skills are developing in line with age-related expectations.
- Pupils' reading skills are better than those in writing and mathematics. Extensive support for pupils in Year 1 last year successfully improved pupils' understanding of phonics (letters and the sounds they make). An above-average proportion of pupils successfully met the required standard in the phonics screening check.
- A similar level of support was provided for pupils in Year 6 last year, when the new headteacher identified the urgent need to improve their grammar, punctuation and spelling. Despite the input they received, the gaps left by poor teaching in the past were too large to close and their achievement was very low when compared to the national average. A similar picture remains in place across Key Stage 2, where the teaching of grammar, punctuation and spelling has not been prioritised. As a result, pupils' knowledge in this area is weak.

Early years provision

is good

- Children join the Reception class with skills and knowledge that are variable, and in many cases lower than is expected for their age. They get off to a very good start in this class and the proportion that enter Year 1 with a good level of development is slightly above the national average. This represents an improvement on the previous year where this figure was below the national average.
- Staffing stability and good teaching mean that the Early Years Foundation Stage is currently the most effective part of the school.
- Pupils currently in Year 1 were well prepared to make the transition from the Reception class.
- Children make good progress because teaching is well planned and activities are interesting. Children enjoy their learning in a classroom where both indoor and outdoor areas are exciting. Teaching takes account of individual children's needs, and progress is clear from the work that children are producing.
- Behaviour is good in this part of the school. Children gain important independent learning skills and are

expected to conduct themselves well. They work together amiably and integrate with the rest of school in assemblies and at lunchtimes.

- Leadership in the Early Years Foundation Stage is effective and is beginning to have a positive impact on other parts of the school. The good practice demonstrated in the Reception class is supporting improving outcomes in Year 1. For example, assessment strategies which have worked very well in the Reception class are being adapted to suit the needs of older pupils.
- Parents are very positive about their children's experiences in the Early Years Foundation Stage. They are kept informed about their children's progress and how they are settling and responding to full-time schooling.

School details

Unique reference number	110843
Local authority	Cambridgeshire
Inspection number	10005668

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

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	153
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Julie Coales
Headteacher	Nina Redhead
Telephone number	01945 410312
Website	www.wsmprimary.co.uk
Email address	office@wisbech-st-mary.cambs.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	29 May 2012

Information about this school

- The school is smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- Few pupils are from minority ethnic groups or whose first language is believed to be other than English.
- The proportion of pupils eligible for support from the pupil premium grant is above average. (The pupil premium grant provides additional funding for looked after children and pupils known to be eligible for free school meals.)
- The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or who are disabled is broadly average.
- The school failed to meet the current government floor standards in 2015. These express the minimum expectations for what pupils should achieve by the end of their time in the school.
- The school is at an early stage of preparing to convert to academy status, with the Diocese of Ely Multi-Academy Trust as the proposed sponsor.

Information about this inspection

- This inspection was initially scheduled as a short inspection for schools judged as good at their previous inspection. Midway through the short inspection, Her Majesty's Inspector decided to convert the inspection to a full inspection based on the emerging evidence. On the second day of the inspection, two Ofsted Inspectors joined the inspection to gather additional evidence.
- Inspectors observed lessons; some of these were jointly observed with the headteacher. Inspectors also visited smaller groups of pupils in additional sessions.
- Inspectors met with pupils formally and informally.
- Inspectors met with the Chair of Governors and four other governors. There were also meetings with a representative of the local authority and a representative of the Diocese of Ely.
- There were too few responses from parents to the online questionnaire for inspectors to view. Inspectors spoke with parents at the start of the school day.
- Inspectors considered the views of members of staff in all roles, expressed both via the staff questionnaire and in meetings.
- Inspectors reviewed records provided by the school, including information about pupil progress, minutes of meetings of the governing body and documents relating to behaviour, attendance and safeguarding.

Inspection team

Chris Moodie, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Linda Allison	Ofsted Inspector
Christopher Perry	Ofsted Inspector

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Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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