

St Mary's Bluecoat CofE (VA) Primary School

Lodge Lane, The Grove, Bridgnorth, WV15 5EQ

Inspection dates 20–21 September 2012

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		Requires improvement	3
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 not enough good teaching to ensure that pupils achieve consistently well.
- The work set in lessons is not always demanding enough to promote good progress.
- Leadership and management have not been good enough to bring about marked improvements in teaching and learning.
- The way leaders check the quality of lessons is not robust enough, or focused enough on the impact of teaching on pupils' learning.
- Although pupils are engaging more fully in their learning, in too many lessons they are simply compliant.
- Governors have not focused sharply enough on how well learning is improving.
- Pupils do not have enough opportunities to use computers to enhance their learning.

The school has the following strengths

- Some teaching is good.
- Pupils enjoy coming to school and attendance is above average.
- Parents and governors are very supportive of the school, with many governors involved in training for their role.
- The changes to the senior leadership team mean more people are making an effective contribution.
- The senior leadership team are aware of the school's strengths and weaknesses, and plan accordingly. They all make a positive input to the development plan.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors formally observed 13 lessons, along with visits to many more, and held meetings with staff, pupils and governors.
- They analysed data on pupils' performance and current progress, along with the school's own monitoring of its performance.
- They considered the returns made by parents to Parent View, the online questionnaire, along with staff questionnaire returns.

Inspection team

Keith Shannon, Lead inspector

Additional inspector

Andrew Morrish

Additional inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is an averaged-sized primary school.
- The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups is below average, and very few speak English as an additional language.
- The proportions of pupils supported at school action is broadly average, as is the proportion who are supported at school action plus or have a statement of special educational needs.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium (extra money given to schools by the government) is below average.
- There is a playgroup on the school site, but it is not managed by the school's governing body.
- There have been seen significant changes in staffing, especially at leadership level, since the previous inspection.
- The school meets current government floor standards, which set the expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching so much more is good or better by ensuring that:
 - teachers make effective use of ongoing assessments to plan activities that meet pupils' needs more precisely and challenge them better
 - teachers actively engage and interest pupils in learning, in every lesson
 - letter sounds are always taught accurately and every opportunity is taken to enable pupils to talk with adults about their reading.
- Improve leadership and management, including governance, by ensuring that:
 - school leaders implement a systematic and effective programme of performance management
 - lesson monitoring has a sharper focus on the impact of teaching on pupils' learning, and improvements to teaching are consistently supported by detailed feedback and robust follow-up visits
 - plans for improvement give useful detail and the effectiveness of strategies in assisting pupils to achieve well is regularly monitored, reviewed and reported to governors.
- Improve the richness and depth of the curriculum by ensuring that:
 - pupils have access to an appropriate range of innovative resources found on the internet.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Standards are not improving fast enough. Attainment in English and mathematics remains broadly average because too few pupils make good progress and reach the higher levels of attainment. Attainment in science is below average.
- Progress is inconsistent in lessons. It is good in some, but not fast enough to ensure higher standards in others. In these lessons the work provided is not demanding enough to ensure that pupils attain at the levels they are capable of.
- A passive approach by pupils in some lessons has been seen by staff as good behaviour and thoughtfulness. Not enough teachers and other staff ensure that pupils routinely become engrossed in their learning.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs are usually supported well through a range of interventions, including small group work with specialist staff. On occasions low expectations of what they may achieve are limiting progress and attainment. These pupils and those who are known to be entitled to the pupil premium are making similar progress to their peers.
- More-able pupils are not always sufficiently stretched. Sometimes they complete relatively straightforward tasks and are not then asked to use or apply their skills in more demanding or broader contexts. Where clearly targeted work is in place pupils made good progress.
- The youngest children are performing in line with national expectations. The teaching of phonics is not always carried out effectively, with some staff mispronouncing sounds.
- Changes in staffing have particularly affected provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage. The school has an intervention programme to ensure that staff skills are regularly updated.
- The pace at which the youngest children develop into confident speakers requires improvement. Staff are working with the parents of pre-school children to develop strategies to improve language use.
- Pupils show a good knowledge of world faiths. They engage particularly well in music lessons, when they enjoy their learning.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- Teaching requires improvement because not enough is of sufficiently good quality to promote good progress. Nevertheless, there are examples of good practice on which to build.
- Teachers do not always use their knowledge of the pupils' needs to plan lessons, or change direction during lessons, in order to set work at the right level. Where they do, lessons enable pupils to engage successfully, and good progress is made.
- While pupils are challenged effectively in some lessons, many of the weaker areas in lessons originate in planning that does not take sufficient account of what pupils need to learn next. The work the teachers set for pupils is sometimes not based accurately on what they already know and are able to do, so the steps that pupils have to take to succeed are not always sufficiently clear.

- Some lessons do not maintain pupils' interest. Lesson plans sometimes show imagination, but not all are translated into practice and then pupils make less progress than they should.
- There are many opportunities for pupils to read, and many enjoy doing so. Guided reading sessions are more effective when taken in small groups away from the main lesson. The sounds that letters make are not consistently taught correctly to younger pupils. Opportunities for pupils to talk with adults about their reading are sometimes missed.
- Teaching in the Early Years Foundation Stage requires improvement. There are good facilities for children to learn through play and experimentation, but sometimes adults use an approach that is too formal and this constrains learning.
- Teachers generally provide useful written feedback to pupils. This includes explaining what has been done well, and how it may be improved. The best examples also include written dialogue between teacher and pupil in order to check understanding.
- Classrooms are attractive. The teachers create lively and well-resourced rooms for the pupils. In many cases there are useful prompts and reminders interestingly displayed on the classroom walls. Pupils enjoy tracking their ongoing improvement, behaviour and attendance on the wall charts, making these valuable tools for learning.

The behaviour and safety of pupils requires improvement

- Pupils' generally compliant attitudes mean that there is very little disruption in lessons. However, pupils are sometimes too passive and do not engage fully with their learning, and this limits their progress.
- Pupils generally behave well on the playground but some say that a small group of boys do occasionally bully others. This was also a concern for a number of parents, although all parents reported in the questionnaire that their children were happy in the school. Any rare instances of bullying, are carefully recorded and pupils are confident that they will be dealt with.
- The school promotes a good understanding of cultural differences through the curriculum, visitors to the school and trips out.
- Attendance is above average. The school's annual surveys show that most pupils enjoy school and feel safe both in school and on the playground. Most pupils feel their teachers respond quickly to prevent any poor behaviour.
- Parents generally feel behaviour is well managed.
- Pupils whose circumstances have made them more vulnerable are ably supported by teaching assistants, and helped by individual intervention plans. Many pupils spoke of this support and how it helps them at school.
- Pupils have a good knowledge of internet safety and the different forms bullying can take, including cyber-bullying, although the lack of available computers and limited wireless connection often make access to the internet difficult within school.

The leadership and management requires improvement

- The school's leaders have the capacity to improve it. The many changes in staffing have slowed significantly the progress of initiatives. However, a period of sustained stability is

now providing a secure base for rapidly improving leadership and management.

- The school's self-evaluation is accurate, so the school improvement plan identifies the right areas for improvement. Some improvement activities are planned in limited detail. They do not list exactly what must improve and by when, to bring about rapid change, so their success in ensuring better progress and equal opportunity for all groups of pupils is harder to monitor.
- Formal performance management has had limited impact on teaching, partly because staff changes have interrupted the system. Nevertheless, monitoring of teaching through lesson observations takes place, with some feedback and teachers agreeing targets for improvement. Detailed feedback and robust follow-up of targets are not yet consistently established.
- Some of the observations have focused too much on teaching rather than weighing its impact on learning, but this is starting to improve. Leaders are being trained to further sharpen and improve the effectiveness of their lesson observations. The headteacher currently has two acting deputy headteachers, and is aware that leadership expertise and responsibilities are not yet shared widely among the staff.
- Systems for ensuring that all staff are held accountable for how their work has an impact upon pupils' attainment are now proving more effective. Opportunities for sharing good practice are now helping to raise expectations in the classroom. Lesson observations are showing clear evidence of improvements in teaching.
- The curriculum covers basic skills and pupils learn to use computers, but the limited access means that the valuable resources now available on the internet cannot be sufficiently exploited to give the curriculum more richness and depth.
- The governance of the school:
 - requires improvement because governors are not always fully informed by an accurate and first-hand view of how the school is performing
 - effectively carries out performance management of the headteacher
 - has direct and appropriate links to the parents' association, and governors listen carefully to parental concerns, although in their questionnaires about 20% of parents feel that school leaders are not as approachable as they should be.
 - is very supportive
 - ensures that safeguarding procedures and practices meet current statutory 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	123536
Local authority	Shropshire
Inspection number	402172

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	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	169
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Kay Blackford (vice-chair)
Headteacher	Sue Farrell
Date of previous school inspection	15 September 2009
Telephone number	01746 763455
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