

Finchingfield Church of England V C Primary School

Vicarage Road, Braintree, CM7 4LD

Inspection dates

30 April–1 May 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Outstanding	1
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Consistently good teaching, with some that is outstanding, means pupils enjoy learning and achieve well in lessons and over time.
- Pupils usually reach standards that are above average. The Year 6 pupils currently in school are typically working at levels that are well above those expected for their age.
- Progress in reading and mathematics is particularly good.
- Teachers have high expectations of the quality of work pupils produce. Marking is particularly effective in informing pupils what they do well and what must be improved.
- Pupils are very keen to learn, and they get on with what they are asked to do willingly; their attitudes to learning are outstanding.
- Pupils feel safe and secure, and are well-informed about how they can help keep themselves safe from harm. They say that there is no bullying. Their behaviour around school is excellent and they are very supportive and accepting of each other.
- The headteacher knows what to do to improve the school further. He helps teachers to improve their teaching skills to accelerate pupils' achievement effectively.
- Governors provide the school with good levels of challenge and support. They help to drive improvement at a good rate. They make sure that the school meets all statutory requirements.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- There is not yet enough teaching which is outstanding. Occasionally the pace of a few lessons is too leisurely, and pupils are not always helped to take responsibility for the setting and achieving of their targets.
- Standards in writing are not as high as in reading and mathematics
- Older pupils do not get enough training in recognising groups of letters and the sounds they make (phonics), which hinders their spelling of more complex words.
- Pupils are not writing enough for real purposes.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed 11 lessons taught by four teachers, as well as sessions led by teaching assistants. The headteacher participated in many of these observations.
- The inspector met with pupils to find out their views about their learning and behaviour, and looked at the work they were doing in lessons, as well as the work they have done in their books over time. He also observed pupils during their free time and discussed their wider experience of the school.
- A wide range of documents were looked at, particularly those keeping track of how well pupils are performing in different subjects. Safeguarding information and behaviour logs were scrutinised and plans to bring about further improvements were evaluated. The inspector also reviewed the school's records about checking the quality of the teaching, and documents showing how the governors have contributed to school improvements.
- The inspector took account of the 21 responses to the on-line parent questionnaire (Parent View). Responses to the school's own parental survey were evaluated and informal discussions with parents were held. The inspector also analysed the questionnaires responses completed by staff.

Inspection team

Andrew Saunders, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This is a small school in a rural village, with three classes that are of mixed age.
- The headteacher has been in the post since April 2012. There have been other changes in staffing recently.
- Almost all pupils are White British.
- In some classes there is an uneven proportion of boys and girls, often with a higher proportion of girls. More pupils than usual join or leave the school other than at the expected times.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs, including those supported at school action and school action plus or with a statement, is average.
- There are fewer pupils than average supported by the pupil premium. This is additional government funding for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals, children from service families and those that are looked after.
- There are too few pupils in the Year 6 cohort to apply the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for the attainment and progress of pupils.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the proportion of outstanding teaching by:
 - making sure that there is a sense of urgency about how much work pupils get done in each lesson, reminding pupils about deadlines that have been set
 - giving pupils more opportunities to take responsibility for deciding when they have reached their targets and what targets they need to work towards next
- Raise attainment in writing to match the high standards in reading and mathematics by:
 - developing pupils' skills in phonics to improve their confidence and ability to spell complex words
 - providing pupils with more opportunities to write for real purposes.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

is good

- When the youngest pupils enter school they have skills and knowledge that are typical for their age. The small classes and excellent links between younger and older pupils mean they settle into the routines quickly and reach a good level of development and achieve well in all areas of learning, particularly in speaking and listening. Participating in some activities alongside the Year 1 pupils means pupils in Reception have good opportunities to do challenging work.
- Pupils' progress across the school is good, and more-able pupils are particularly well challenged so that they often make rapid progress. Teachers have high expectations of the level of work all pupils are capable of, and pupils rise to this. Work in books, lesson observations and the school's progress tracking information all show that pupils make good progress in lessons and over time.
- By the end of Year 6, pupils typically reach standards which are above average. While standards were lower than usual in 2012, the pupils made good progress from their original starting points. Pupils currently in Year 6 are already working at levels which are above average, often a year or more ahead, particularly in their reading and mathematics. They make outstanding progress in these subjects.
- Progress in writing is not as rapid across the school as it is in reading and mathematics. This is because pupils do not get enough opportunities to write for real purposes and the older pupils' spelling could be better. When pupils are undertaking writing activities in their books its quality is not always at the highest level.
- Younger pupils quickly become confident readers because phonics skills are taught effectively. They are given lots of opportunities to enjoy reading. The older pupils' ability to spell complex and difficult words is not as strong as it should be because not all older pupils get phonics teaching to help them decode unfamiliar words. At times, this hampers their writing attainment, particularly their ability to achieve the higher National Curriculum levels in writing.
- At times, pupils work at a leisurely pace and lack a sense of urgency about how much work they complete in a lesson. Recent strategies that have been introduced mean pupils are beginning to focus on getting more done in the timescales set.
- The support for disabled pupils and those with special educational needs is carefully thought out, well targeted and is effective, therefore, they make good gains in their learning. Additional activities provided complement the work done in class so pupils do not miss out on key topics or explanations when not in class.
- There were not enough pupils known to be eligible for free school meals in 2012 to comment on their attainment and progress without identifying them.

The quality of teaching

is good

- Most of the teaching observed was good, and some was outstanding. Records of the monitoring of teaching show that this is typical. There is a very calm atmosphere in classes and this allows pupils to concentrate on the work that they are doing.
- Occasionally, the pace of pupils' work slows when they are working on their own, because

teachers do not always remind pupils about the deadlines that have been set and, while teachers expect a high quality of work, there is not always as much emphasis on how much work pupils produce in the time available.

- Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage and pupils in Year 1 have good resources, particularly to develop their number and writing skills. For example, they enjoyed using the displays, books and artefacts to find out about their topic of space, drawing and describing shapes.
- Pupils are given helpful targets so that they know what must be improved. However, these are set by the teachers and pupils do not participate enough in deciding if they have achieved these goals, or choosing what they must do next to further improve.
- Teachers use the information that they have about each pupil to plan work which is closely linked to what they need to learn. This means that all pupils, whatever their ability or year group, are given work that is suitably challenging. Teachers keep a close check on how well pupils have understood the concepts taught and provide extra challenge when needed.
- Teachers share ideas about how to improve teaching, such as asking probing questions, a key feature of the best lessons. Teachers make good use of the interactive computer whiteboards and laptops to keep pupils interested and to develop their skills in writing using a keyboard.
- Marking of work in pupils books is impressive, following an agreed format. Teachers make sure that pupils know exactly what they have achieved, and what they need to do next.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

- Pupils are very proud of their school, work hard, and have immensely positive views about the education that they receive. They like being at school as demonstrated by their above average attendance. Parents hold similarly positive views about behaviour and think the school keeps their children safe and secure.
- Pupils behave exceptionally well and have excellent attitudes to learning. They feel very safe at school and are well informed about how to keep themselves safe, for example, when cycling on roads or when using the internet. They say that bullying rarely if ever happens, and that any time they fall out with one another, it gets sorted out quickly. They have discussed how unkind words can hurt others and take care over what they say.
- In lessons and at break times, they very seldom need any reminders about what is expected of them; the school ethos promotes the very best behaviour. Pupils get lots of praise and encouragement for good behaviour. They get along extremely well during their free time, organising their own games and clubs, such as animation and chess clubs, which are very popular.
- Older pupils help younger pupils with their reading. They are good role models for them and help develop and instil a love of reading. Pupils also appreciate that their work is celebrated in assemblies, and by being displayed around the school. They are particularly thrilled when an exceptional piece of work is put into the 'golden book'.
- Pupils particularly enjoy thinking about deeper issues, such as the benefits and drawbacks of

recycling, and the moral dilemma this may cause. They readily understand that others may hold different views from their own, and are very accepting of this. They help to promote equality of opportunity by sharing their learning, for example, with pupils in other schools, using internet technology.

The leadership and management are good

- Since arriving at the school the headteacher has established an accurate view of its work and has brought about significant improvements in teaching and learning. He holds teachers to account for the progress pupils in their class are making. He encourages them well and makes sure that they receive feedback on exactly what they need to do to improve teaching and learning quality.
- With a small staff, many leadership roles are shared and there is a strong sense of teamwork among all of the adults working in school. However, specific roles in leading the teaching and learning, in some subjects, for example writing, are not yet well developed and this means that there is not always a strong enough drive for the very best practice.
- Pupils have good opportunities to learn new skills and extend their knowledge, within interesting topics. Special focus weeks give them the chance to take their learning further, for example, in the Formula One week, particularly developing mathematical skills, which was greatly enjoyed.
- The school collects accurate information about how well pupils are doing and uses this to check that all pupils are challenged and make at least good gains in learning. Any pupils who are at risk of falling behind are identified quickly, and support is put in place to help them overcome any specific issues that they face.
- The school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination effectively. There is considerable emphasis on giving pupils rich opportunities to think about spiritual, moral and social concepts. Particular topics and visits are carefully chosen to help pupils gain a good understanding of their own and other cultures, through such activities as the India week and a visit to a Hindu temple by the whole school. Such approaches emphasise the school's ethos that everyone is important, and everybody should participate in what the school offers.
- The local authority has provided good support to the headteacher, to develop his skills in checking the quality of teaching and to confirm his views about the key areas that need to be improved further. The school is an active part of a group of local, small schools who support each other effectively. This helps staff to keep up to date with developments and consider new ideas to improve provision.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governors and headteacher have made sure that all government safeguarding requirements are met. All adults who work with pupils are appropriately vetted to confirm their suitability to work with children. Governors have undertaken regular training to fulfil their statutory duties and know the data about the school's performance and how it compares with national figures. The headteacher provides governors with highly detailed information about pupils' attainment, progress and teaching but they supplement this with their own, first-hand observations when they are in school. They frequently challenge leaders to explain why particular approaches are adopted, and follow up any issues to check that the strategies used are effective. Senior leaders and governors have developed a suitable strategic vision for the school. Governors hold the school to account for how the pupil premium funding is used,

checking that it is making a difference to the outcomes for those who receive it. The management of staff performance is good. Governors demonstrate a clear understanding of teaching quality and the actions taken to reward good performance and to tackle any underperformance quickly. Pay awards reflect individuals' teaching performance.

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	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. 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.

School details

Unique reference number	115107
Local authority	Essex
Inspection number	413021

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	57
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Martin Lee
Headteacher	Alastair Robinson
Date of previous school inspection	18 January 2008
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