

# Ulcombe Church of England Primary School

The Street, Ulcombe, Maidstone, Kent ME17 1DU

**Inspection dates** 11–12 December 2013

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	This inspection:	<b>Requires improvement</b>	<b>3</b>
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

- The progress made by pupils has been too variable so that achievement in English and mathematics over time is not yet good.
- Pupils do not have sufficient opportunities to work independently to apply their mathematical skills in solving problems.
- Teachers do not consistently check on pupils' understanding in ways which require pupils to think more about their learning.
- Reading activities do not sufficiently develop pupils' inference skills in ways that deepen their understanding.
- Pupils do not consistently present their writing to a high enough standard.
- Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage do not have enough learning experiences within the outdoor setting.
- Some pupils do not attend school often enough.
- Subject leaders have yet to fully develop their skills in evaluating the quality of teaching and checking on how well pupils are doing.
- Governors have not addressed inconsistencies in teaching and pupils' progress well enough, to ensure the achievement of pupils is good overtime.

### The school has the following strengths

- The executive headteacher, supported by staff, has been very effective in improving teaching to ensure rapid gains in pupils' progress across all year groups.
- Pupils say they feel safe and enjoy their lessons. They talk confidently about how well they are doing and how to move to the next level in their work.
- Other adults within the classroom are especially skilled in supporting pupils with particular learning needs so they become successful in their work.
- Teachers' written comments in pupils' books help pupils to improve their work against their learning targets, especially in English.

## Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed seven lessons, three of which were joint lesson observations with the headteacher. The inspector listened to pupils read and looked at pupils' work in their exercise books.
- The inspector met with pupils and talked about their work. Meetings were also held with the Early Years Foundation Stage teacher, the headteacher, governors and a representative of the local authority.
- Documentation covering safeguarding, the management of performance of staff, records of behaviour and safety, attendance and checks on pupils' attainment and progress was reviewed.
- The inspector took account of 12 responses from parents and carers to the online questionnaire (Parent View), and 13 questionnaires from staff. The inspector also talked to parents and carers informally during the inspection.

## Inspection team

Howard Jones, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- This is a much-smaller-than-average-sized primary school.
- Pupils are taught in mixed-age classes which include the Early Years Foundation Stage. These groupings change for English and mathematics.
- The large majority of pupils come from a White British background. The largest ethnic minority group of pupils come from Gypsy, Roma and Traveller backgrounds.
- The proportion of pupils receiving support from the pupil premium funding, which is the extra government support for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals, looked after children and those from service families, is above average. In this school, it relates to pupils who are known to qualify for free school meals.
- When compared to national figures, the proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs at school action is above average; the proportion of pupils at school action plus or who have a statement of special educational needs is below average.
- In 2013, the school did not meet the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in English and mathematics.
- The executive headteacher joined the school at the beginning of November 2013, as part of an arrangement brokered by the local authority. This includes collaboration with the governing body of another school which is led by the executive headteacher.

### What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching so that it is consistently good or better in order to raise pupils' achievement by:
  - planning effective opportunities for children in Reception to develop their learning within the outdoor setting
  - improving pupils' independence as learners by providing activities which require them to apply their mathematical skills to solve real-life problems
  - teachers regularly checking pupils' understanding in ways which require pupils to reflect on their learning to provide further challenge
  - ensuring pupils' writing is presented to a high standard
  - enabling pupils to apply their inference skills so they read with greater understanding.
- Improve attendance for all pupils by:
  - closely checking the effectiveness of current actions to reduce absence.
- Increase the impact of leaders, managers and governors by:
  - developing the responsibilities of subject leaders to include a more effective role in evaluating the quality of teaching and checking pupils' progress
  - strengthening the role of governors to hold leaders to account for its performance by developing their skills to check how well the school is doing.

An external review of governance should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

## Inspection judgements

### The achievement of pupils

### requires improvement

- Pupils' achievement over time varies too much. Progress made by all groups of pupils across Key Stage 2 has been uneven. Consequently, not enough pupils have made more than the expected progress by the end of Year 6 in both English and mathematics, albeit given the small numbers within successive cohorts.
- Children enter Reception with broadly the expected levels of skills and understanding for their age. Most children leave at levels that would be expected, although this does vary between each year because of the small numbers. Children do not always make better progress because they do not have enough learning experiences within the outdoor setting.
- Attainment at the end of Year 2 has been below the national average for most pupils. The number of pupils meeting the expected standard in the 2013 Year 1 check of phonics (letters and sounds) was below average. Progress in reading is weaker for older pupils because activities do not always require them to become more competent in their use of inference.
- Achievement for more able pupils has been variable. They mostly have attained the levels that would be expected by the end of Year 6 but, like their peers, the proportion making more than the expected progress has not been as consistent, especially in mathematics.
- Gaps in pupils' skills and understanding are now closing rapidly. Progress for pupils across all year groups is accelerating because of the actions taken by the executive headteacher. Pupils in Year 6 are now on track to achieve higher standards than previous years in both English and mathematics.
- Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs make good progress overall. The school has a strong focus on supporting the learning of these pupils within lessons, so that they become inspired in their work as they enjoy sharing in a variety of tasks along with other pupils.
- Traveller and Gypsy Roma pupils make good progress across the school. They share in the range of opportunities available, are self-assured when talking about their work, and understand how to become even more successful in their learning.
- Pupils supported through the pupil premium are successful and make good progress. Numbers in Year 6 restrict comparisons being made, but school evidence shows that, when compared to their peers across year groups, gaps are closing in attainment for these pupils in both English and mathematics.
- The school is effectively supporting pupils to develop their physical well-being. Pupils participate in gymnastics, dance and orienteering. Fencing activities extend pupils' coordination, while swimming develops their personal survival skills.

### The quality of teaching

### requires improvement

- Teaching over time has not been of a sufficient quality to promote good achievement. Pupils have therefore made inconsistent progress in reading, writing and mathematics as they move through the school.
- Planning has not provided sufficient opportunities for pupils to develop their skills. Pupils do not have enough experiences to tackle tasks which require them to work independently such as solving real-life problems in mathematics. Activities in writing have not consistently focused on developing pupils' quality of written presentation to a good standard.
- Teachers do not regularly check pupils' understanding to see how secure their learning is. They are skilled in using questioning to assess pupils' prior understanding but, during activities, they do not always use questioning in ways which require pupils to reflect on their learning to enhance their thinking skills to provide further challenge.
- The quality of teaching has improved rapidly under the guidance of the executive headteacher. For example, in a Years 3 and 4 lesson, the teacher ensured tasks were well-matched to the needs of all pupils, regardless of their ability, and written comments in pupils' books helped

pupils to improve their work against their learning targets. Consequently, pupils had a clear understanding of how well they are doing and what they need to do to become successful at the next level of their learning.

- Additional adults are active in supporting the learning of pupils with individual learning needs. Their contribution throughout lessons is evident and they are very effective at sharing in whole class tasks as well as leading small group work. As a result, pupils make good gains in their learning, regardless of their starting point.
- The pace of pupils' learning is strong because teachers have high expectations. For example, within a mixed-age class, children in Reception and pupils in Years 1 and 2 went about their tasks with a sense of purpose, using language effectively to develop their understanding of characters in stories. They remained fully engaged because of the effective learning context established.
- Teachers are adept at demonstrating how to use key ideas to an appropriate standard. For instance, in a Year 5 and 6 numeracy session, the teacher used subject knowledge to explain methods for division so that pupils across the ability range were appropriately supported to access tasks confidently and become successful in their learning.

### **The behaviour and safety of pupils**

### **requires improvement**

- Attendance is below the national average for some pupils. The school has put in place approaches to encourage good attendance; although there have been some recent improvements, over time, the progress of these pupils has been affected and this means that behaviour and safety require improvement.
- There is a positive attitude toward learning across the school, including children in Reception. Pupils clearly relish working collaboratively and remain engaged in their tasks even when these are more challenging. They are eager to talk about how well they are doing and knowledgeable about the level they are working at and what they need to do to improve their work.
- The atmosphere in the school dining hall is calm and movement around the school reflects the strong learning community that has become the norm. Pupils are welcoming and respectful, both toward visitors and each other. They enjoy taking on responsibilities, for example as play mentors for younger children, so that children in Reception have settled well to school life.
- Pupils are confident they are safe in school. They say there has been a marked improvement in behaviour and that racist incidents, name calling and cyber bullying do not occur. Pupils are aware of how to keep themselves safe using the internet and say that discrimination of any kind is not tolerated.
- The school reflects its Christian values across all aspects of learning. Pupils are reflective during assemblies and enjoy responding in both song and prayer. They participate enthusiastically when, for example, comparing ways in which different cultures portray the nativity scene and think about what their personal response might be.

### **The leadership and management**

### **requires improvement**

- The executive headteacher has been highly effective in securing marked improvements in both the quality of teaching and in closing gaps in pupils' understanding, so that progress is now strong for all pupils. Nonetheless, although school evidence shows improving standards, this has yet to be reflected in national tests so that achievement over time is not yet good enough.
- Subject leaders have yet to fully develop their skills in evaluating the quality of teaching and checking on how well pupils are doing. Nonetheless, equality of opportunity is a priority and the provision for pupils with disabilities and special educational needs is clearly mapped throughout the school so that these pupils are as successful as their peers.
- The quality of teaching is closely monitored and effective action has dealt with weak teaching. Observation of teachers' classroom practice is routine and makes clear reference to pupils' progress and teachers' performance targets. Staff training is bespoke to bring about further

improvements, and teacher pay progression corresponds closely to how well pupils are doing.

- The local authority has appropriately enabled the school to make marked improvements in its provision. It has brokered a partnership that has ensured the school can now demonstrate strong capacity so that issues raised in the previous inspection have been addressed, as seen in rapid improvements in pupil outcomes.
- Subjects are now designed and taught in ways to effectively cover the development of pupils' literacy and numeracy skills and so address an issue raised in the previous inspection. Pupils say they enjoy their lessons and feel they have a strong sense of achievement in all their subjects. They say their planned homework learning is equally effective for them.
- There is a range of opportunities for pupils to develop their spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness. Activities include learning about cultural aspects of Traveller and settled communities. Pupils have an enhanced sense of fairness and right and wrong. They have made educational visits, for example to the National Portrait Gallery in London, and enjoy expressing themselves creatively by using different media in art and design.
- All aspects of safeguarding are addressed and risk assessments are in place, for example those that cover school visits.
- **The governance of the school:**
  - Governors are involved within the school, especially in raising its profile in public events within the community. The primary sports funding is being used to increase the expertise of teachers through partnerships and use of sports coaches. Governors have considered ways in which the school might increase the number of pupils on roll. However, the training they have undertaken has not led to an accurate view of the school's performance to enable them to compare the school to others nationally. Nor have they fully considered how the quality of teaching and pupils' progress might improve further. Consequently, checks on teachers' pay and performance have been less rigorous, although procedures are in place to review the headteacher's performance. The school's finances have been managed to cover all aspects of running the school, albeit the pupil premium funding it receives has not been as effectively targeted or monitored for its impact on the progress of these pupils. Recent actions have sought to remedy this. Governors have embarked on a course which has led to collaboration with governors from a neighbouring school, and the appointment of an executive headteacher. These actions are beginning to have a marked impact on pupil outcomes.

## 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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	118631
<b>Local authority</b>	Kent
<b>Inspection number</b>	426477

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary controlled
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	47
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Terry Shortland
<b>Executive Headteacher</b>	Emma Hickling
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	24–25 November 2011
<b>Telephone number</b>	01622 842903
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