

St Mary's Church of England First School, Charminster

West Hill, Charminster, Dorchester, Dorset DT2 9RD

Inspection dates

15–16 March 2017

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- Leaders at all levels, including governors, have not sustained a high standard of education since the previous inspection.
- Teaching, especially in key stage 1, is not promoting pupils' progress effectively. As a result, many pupils do not attain well in reading, writing and mathematics.
- The level of challenge that teaching provides is not consistently high. Whatever their starting points, pupils are not being pushed enough to achieve more.
- Inconsistencies in the quality of phonics teaching mean that pupils do not successfully build on the good start they make in their reading in the early years.
- Pupils do not present or set out their work well. This is a barrier to the development of their ability to write with greater complexity or to use their mathematical reasoning.
- Attainment in the national curriculum assessments at key stage 1 in 2016 was too low.

The school has the following strengths

- The good quality of education provided for children in the early years means that they are well prepared for Year1.
- School leaders have been very successful in reducing absence. Attendance rates are now very high.
- Music is a strength of the school. Pupils enjoy developing their musical ability as a result of highly effective teaching.
- The teaching of mathematics in key stage 2 has improved in recent years. It is now posing a higher degree of challenge, especially to the most able.
- Pupils' personal development is good. They grow in maturity as they progress through the school, taking on extra responsibility as they do so. Pupils largely behave well.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve leadership and management by ensuring that:
 - subject leaders and others with leadership responsibilities develop further so that they can support the headteacher in her drive to improve the quality of education
 - leadership of teaching ensures that pupils receive consistently effective teaching across all year groups and all phases of the school.
- Improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment by ensuring that:
 - teaching across the school, including the early years, provides pupils with a greater degree of challenge so that they make faster progress and attain at higher levels
 - phonics is taught more effectively in key stage 1 so that pupils build successfully on the good start they make in reading in the early years
 - teachers demand a better standard of presentation in pupils' work so that they can show their thinking more clearly.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- School leaders at all levels, including governors, have not successfully sustained a high standard of education since the school was judged outstanding at its previous inspection in 2009. Pupils do not make the progress that would allow them to attain at levels appropriate to their starting points. This is because teaching is not consistently effective across the school in promoting pupils' progress. Overall, therefore, leadership and management require improvement.
- The headteacher has been in post since January 2016, having been acting headteacher for some months before that. No one can deny her commitment, and that of other leaders, to improving the school and leading it out of a period of turmoil in leadership and staffing. Nonetheless, leaders' work has not yet been able to ensure that the quality of education provided by the school has improved enough so that outcomes for pupils are consistently good. Many subject or phase leaders are relatively new to their posts and senior leaders and governors are right to prioritise their further development in their plans for school improvement.
- The leadership of teaching has not ensured that teaching is consistently good across the school or that it provides pupils with the level of challenge that will help them make faster progress. A programme of training for teachers is in place and is based on an understanding of some of the aspects of teaching that need to improve. This training has not been wholly successful, however, in tackling these areas.
- The curriculum is delivered in mixed-year classes across the school, with the exception of one class which is made up solely of children in the Reception Year. In key stage 2, recent changes have been made to how mathematics is taught and this has allowed teachers to pitch activities more closely to the needs of the pupils. Music is given a particular emphasis in the curriculum and is one of its strengths. Pupils sing together regularly and heartily, for example, and this makes a good contribution to their social and cultural development.
- School leaders have acted successfully upon the recommendation made at the previous inspection to improve pupils' understanding of the range of cultures in modern Britain. Pupils learn about different faiths in religious education and about other cultures in geography and history. Moreover, the promotion of fundamental British values is strongly built into the personal, social and health education programme.
- The school uses additional funding appropriately. The provision for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is well led by the special educational needs coordinator. Pupils' needs are accurately identified and effective measures put in place to meet them. For example, the school has created a forest school to help pupils learn to work collaboratively and engage with their learning. The school's work to support pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities was praised by a number of parents in conversations with inspectors.
- The school uses the pupil premium funding effectively to support disadvantaged pupils. Until recently, the school has had very small numbers of pupils eligible for the pupil premium but has thought well about how to use the funding that it gets to the best

effect. Analysis of the impact of the use of the pupil premium is effective and is used to plan how future funding will be spent. For example, the school has worked well to improve the attendance of disadvantaged pupils and has reduced their persistent absence substantially. The use of the pupil premium to employ a parent support adviser has been a key feature of this work.

- In addition to lunchtime and after-school sports clubs, a wide range of other extra-curricular activities is available to pupils. For example, they can take part in storytelling, the choir, computing, gardening or dance. Taken together, these activities make an important contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- The school uses the primary physical education (PE) and sport premium well, both within the curriculum and through a large number of extra-curricular sports clubs. Pupils get to experience a wide range of different sports, including archery, basketball and fencing. As a result, participation rates are high and this contributes to pupils adopting a healthy lifestyle.

Governance of the school

- Governors are committed to the school and a number have a long-standing association with it. Nonetheless, the governing body has not been able to ensure that its work has contributed to maintaining a high standard of education in the school since the previous inspection.
- Under the relatively new chair of governors, the governing body has recently reorganised the way it works. As a result, all governors now have a better understanding of the work of the governing body as a whole. This enhances the governing body's capacity to contribute to improving the quality of education that the school provides.
- Governors have undertaken appropriate training for their roles, including in safeguarding and safer recruitment.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- The headteacher acts as the designated safeguarding lead for the school. Ably supported by her deputy, she has successfully established a culture of safeguarding in the school. Vigilance is the watchword of all staff and effective processes are in place for action to be taken should any child give grounds for concern about their safety. School staff work well with other external agencies to promote pupils' welfare.
- The promotion of pupils' welfare and safety is built into the curriculum, including through external visits. As a result, pupils learn well how to stay safe in a variety of contexts, including when they are online. The vast majority of parents who responded to the online survey agreed that their children were safe and well looked after.
- All staff are trained in safeguarding and child protection to the appropriate level. They also receive regular updates from the headteacher on current safeguarding issues or concerns. The school makes all the required checks on teachers and other staff before they start working at the school. These are recorded efficiently in the single central

record.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- Teaching has not been successful in promoting rates of progress that allow pupils to attain at levels that match their ability. In particular, teaching in key stage 1 is not as effective as it is in the early years or in key stage 2.
- Teaching in key stage 1 is not enabling pupils to acquire the key knowledge, understanding and skills in reading, writing and mathematics quickly enough. The level of challenge is often too low and many pupils are capable of doing much more complex work. As a result, they do not make the progress they need to in order to attain at the levels of which they are capable. This is particularly true of those who are of middle ability and had previously achieved a good level of development in the early years. In addition, teaching is not currently meeting the needs of the most able in mathematics. They do not go on to achieve a greater depth in their learning. By contrast, teaching of the most able in reading and writing is more successful.
- The quality of phonics teaching is too inconsistent to ensure that the good start that children make in reading in the early years is capitalised upon as they move up through the school. As a consequence, fewer pupils pass the Year 1 phonics screening check than would be expected from their attainment in the early years.
- Teaching in key stage 2 is more effective than in key stage 1. Mathematics teaching, for example, is beginning to present a higher degree of challenge. Pupils, especially the most able, are developing their abilities in problem solving and mathematical reasoning more quickly. Questioning is used well to develop thinking. Nonetheless, many pupils arrive in key stage 2 with gaps in their knowledge, understanding and skills that require attention before they can progress further. This legacy of less effective learning slows down progress.
- Teaching is not consistently promoting high standards of presentation in pupils. Too many pupils have not developed the handwriting skills or the ability to set their work out clearly. This inhibits their ability to express more complex ideas clearly or to set out their mathematical reasoning in a way that helps them to understand their work.
- Teaching in the early years is typically effective and promotes good development in children in the Reception Year. Teaching has successfully ensured that the proportion of pupils who attain a good level of development at the end of the early years foundation stage has been consistently in line with the national average in recent years.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils display growing levels of maturity as they move through the school. By Year 4, many are able to take on age-appropriate leadership roles, such as 'playground pals' or acting as 'buddies' to younger pupils. The school council is active and an eco-

committee of pupils works to improve and protect the school environment.

- The school's religious ethos is at the heart of its work to promote pupils' personal development. There are strong links with the local church. For example, pupils visit it regularly and often help out with the work it does with vulnerable groups in society, such as elderly people with dementia.
- Pupils understand and value their assemblies. These occasions are well planned and make an important contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Younger pupils sit with their older 'buddies', and this promotes a feeling of togetherness in the pupil body and adds to the social development of all.
- Pupils develop a good understanding of how to stay safe and also of how to stay healthy, both physically and emotionally. Pupils can talk clearly about how to stay safe in a variety of situations and are grateful for the opportunities to learn about this aspect of life.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils largely behave well. They are polite, courteous and friendly. Behaviour is managed effectively in the classroom and disruptive behaviour is uncommon. When it does occur, teachers and other staff deal with it efficiently.
- The school has taken appropriate measures to deal with pupils who present particularly challenging behaviour to ensure that any disruption to the learning of other pupils is minimised.
- Pupils attend school with great regularity. The school's work to improve attendance has been a notable success. Overall attendance has improved and is now well above the national average. In addition, the attendance of key groups, such as disadvantaged pupils or those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, has also improved. Furthermore, rates of persistent absence have reduced dramatically, especially for disadvantaged pupils. This situation is a consequence of hard work by school leaders and other staff with families whose children had a history of low attendance.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- Outcomes for pupils require improvement because too few are attaining at levels that match their ability and prior learning. The work of pupils currently in the school shows a pattern of inconsistent progress in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Pupils get off to a solid start in the early years but many do not sustain this as they move through the school, especially during key stage 1. By the time pupils reach key stage 2, they have gaps in their knowledge, understanding and skills which have to be filled before further progress can be made.
- This picture of inconsistent progress across the key stages is reflected in the outcomes of the national curriculum assessments at key stage 1 in 2016. In each of reading, writing and mathematics, a much smaller proportion of pupils attained the expected

standard. Of particular concern is the very low number of pupils who had attained the expected standard in the early years in each subject but did not go on to do so two years later at the end of key stage 1. These pupils are currently in Year 3 and their current work shows that they have ground to make up.

- The most able pupils did not make good progress in mathematics in the key stage 1 assessments in 2016. While all the most able mathematicians reached the expected standard, in line with the national average, none of them achieved greater depth within the standard. These pupils are now in key stage 2 and effective teaching there is promoting faster progress. Many are now beginning to show signs of their ability to work at greater depth.
- Inconsistencies in phonics teaching mean that pupils' progress in reading falters, particularly those of middle or lower ability. In the early years, the proportion of children who have attained the early learning goal in reading has been consistently in line with or above the national average. Over the same period, however, lower proportions of pupils go on to pass the phonics screening check. To take one example, 88% of pupils attained the early learning goal in reading in 2014. However, in the following year only 78% passed the phonics screening check and only 60% reached the expected standard in the key stage 1 assessment in reading in 2016, significantly below the national average. Attainment in reading was also significantly below the national average in 2015.
- The most able pupils made better progress in reading and writing in the 2016 key stage 1 assessments. A higher proportion of pupils in these subjects achieved a greater depth within the standard than the national figure. The most able readers can cope confidently with complex texts and read them fluently.
- Outcomes in the early years are good. The proportion of children achieving a good level of development has been consistently in line with the national figure, with attainment in numbers and shape, space and measures consistently higher.
- The school has a relatively small cohort of disadvantaged pupils, with some year groups having a very small number indeed. This makes generalisations about their progress as a group difficult. Nonetheless, examination of their work and the school's own tracking information would indicate that they make progress broadly in line with other pupils in the school. This means that they have the same pattern of inconsistent progress across year groups.

Early years provision

Good

- The education that children receive in the early years foundation stage is good and has been for a number of years. As a result of effective teaching, children get off to a good start and are well prepared for Year 1 at the end of Reception Year. School leaders have a good understanding of the strengths of the early years and the areas that require further work, such as writing.
- The proportion of children who achieve a good level of development in their early learning goals is consistently in line with the national figure. In particular, they do well in the areas of mathematics, numbers and shapes, space and measures. On the other hand, the proportion reaching the early learning goal in writing is consistently the

lowest, although it is close to national outcomes in writing.

- Some teaching and associated activities do not challenge the most able children and this means that the proportion of children exceeding their early learning goals is not as high as that seen nationally.
- Assessments of children's learning as recorded in their learning journals are robust and well evidenced. Teachers are knowledgeable about how to use the early years profile to assess children's overall development.
- The curriculum in the early years involves a wide range of activities, including using information technology and trips out.
- Children's behaviour is generally good in the classroom and the outdoor space. Although, when occasionally teaching is not as effective as it is typically, some children lose concentration. Where teaching is highly effective, as in music, they can sustain focus well. Most are developing the habits of good learners at their age.
- Parents are closely involved in the education of their children in the early years. They help teachers to assess their children's starting points and are kept well informed about their progress. Teachers also work closely with parents to model how they can help their children to continue learning when they are at home, for example by providing them with help-sheets in phonics.
- Leaders identify children's needs at an early stage. Parents are very pleased with the transition arrangements and how their views are considered when deciding whether or not to allocate their children to the mixed Reception and Year 1 class. Most of the children come from the pre-school, which shares the school's site, and there are close links between it and the school. This also helps to ensure that any particular needs are identified at an early stage.
- The school has a very small number of disadvantaged children in the early years and it is not possible to make any generalisation about their progress.
- There are no breaches of statutory requirements. Safeguarding is effective, with appropriate risk assessments in place.

School details

Unique reference number	113784
Local authority	Dorset
Inspection number	10024940

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	First
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	5 to 9
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	197
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Duncan Williams
Headteacher	Suzanne Garner
Telephone number	01305 263880
Website	www.charminster.dorset.sch.uk
Email address	office@charminster.dorset.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	4 March 2009

Information about this school

- The school does not meet requirements on the publication of information about contact details, the pupil premium and the PE and sport premium.
- St Mary's Church of England First School, Charminster is a school of smaller than average size. It admits children from Reception through to Year 4. With the exception of one Reception class, all classes are mixed-age.
- A much lower proportion of pupils than nationally are eligible for free school meals, although the number is rising. A very small number of pupils are from minority ethnic groups or speak English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is slightly higher than the national average.
- The school is a member of the Dorchester Area Schools Partnership, which includes

first, middle and upper schools.

- As the school does not have pupils in Year 6, the government's floor standards do not apply.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed the learning of pupils in lessons and looked at the work in their books. During these visits to lessons, they also talked to pupils about their learning and their experiences in the school. Inspectors also talked more formally to two groups of pupils from key stage 1 and key stage 2. Observations in lessons were often done jointly with members of the senior leadership team.
- Inspectors held discussions with the headteacher and other senior leaders. The lead inspector also met with members of the governing body, including the chair of governors. He spoke to the school's evaluation partner by telephone.
- Inspectors examined a range of documentary evidence, including the school's self-evaluation, its development plan, records of pupils' progress, and governors' minutes. Documents regarding safeguarding were also closely examined, including the single central record of pre-employment checks made on teachers and other staff.
- In reaching their judgements, inspectors took account of 36 responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online survey of parental opinion.

Inspection team

Stephen Lee, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Julie Jane	Ofsted Inspector
Janet Maul	Ofsted Inspector

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In the report, 'disadvantaged pupils' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route. www.gov.uk/pupil-premium-information-for-schools-and-alternative-provision-settings.

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