

Kennet Valley Church of England Aided Primary School

Lockeridge, Marlborough, Wiltshire SN8 4EL

Inspection dates

15–16 November 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	Good

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- Too many pupils, most of whom had middle or high prior attainment, did not make the progress they should by the time they left school at the end of key stage 2.
- Teachers do not have consistently high enough expectations of what pupils can achieve.
- Until recently, leaders at all levels have not focused enough on raising pupils' achievement.
- Writing in subjects or topics outside of literacy lessons is too variable in quality and presentation.
- Improvements in mathematics are not yet secure enough to compensate for recent underachievement.
- School plans for improvement, while focusing on relevant priorities, are not sufficiently precise in identifying how and when improvements will be implemented, and how their outcomes will be evaluated.
- Governors, as well as school leaders at all levels, have not checked the quality of teaching and the standard of pupils' work systematically enough to ensure good progress.

The school has the following strengths

- Children in the early years make good progress.
- Pupils behave well and feel very safe in school. The quality of care and support for pupils, especially those who may be more vulnerable, is outstanding.
- The school provides very well for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- Pupils enjoy the range of themes and topics which the school's curriculum provides.
- Under the leadership of the acting headteacher, improvements are taking place in teaching and pupils' progress.
- Parents support the school enthusiastically, especially for its quality of care and support for their children. They also greatly appreciate the regular, innovative opportunities they have to see and comment on their children's work.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve progress in writing and mathematics by:
 - ensuring that writing in subjects other than English shows greater range and depth, and that pupils with middle and high prior attainment make at least good progress
 - further embedding strategies for improvement in mathematics, so that the recent development in pupils' mathematical skills is sustained and extended.
- Improve teaching by making sure that teachers have consistently high expectations of what pupils can achieve and set tasks with an appropriate level of challenge.
- Improve leadership and management by:
 - refining strategic planning so that it focuses more on the key issues, with appropriate timescales and success criteria
 - improving the effectiveness with which senior and middle leaders, supported by governors, check the quality of teaching and learning to ensure that there are consistently high expectations of what pupils can achieve.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- While school leaders and governors are aware of the need for improvement in pupils' achievement, they have not, until recently, focused sufficiently on how to turn their aspirations and ambitions into a coordinated approach to improve progress. As a result, pupils' progress by the end of key stage 2 has declined on several counts since the previous inspection.
- School planning identifies many different goals for improvement, but is not precise enough in setting out how and when the school will tackle underachievement, and how leaders will measure success. Leaders' evaluation of the school's progress has been too optimistic.
- The acting headteacher, who has been in this role for a very short time, has continued with the improvement strategies already in place while introducing others. However, several of these measures have not been embedded enough to produce rapid and sustained improvement in pupils' progress. Consequently, progress in the core subjects of writing, reading and mathematics has not been rapid enough.
- The school provides a balanced curriculum, with topics that interest pupils. However, it does not yet give a secure enough grounding in pupils' core reading, writing and mathematics skills, which they need to be prepared well for the next stage of their education.
- The acting headteacher is determined to improve the school further. Other staff provide good support. Parents are very complimentary about the current leadership. There are strong links between parents and the school. This is evident, for example, in the way that the school gives parents secure access to their children's work online.
- The leadership of the early years has ensured good teaching and progress for children in Reception.
- School leaders promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development very successfully. They combine this with other aspects of personal development. Staff encourage pupils to be reflective thinkers and prepare them well for life in modern Britain. Pupils learn about the democratic process and are involved in decision-making, for example about parts of the curriculum. Staff encourage pupils to respect others' points of view.
- This is a very inclusive school which celebrates diversity at the same time as being grounded in its own strong Christian ethos.
- School leaders use the sport premium funding creatively to provide some expert coaching and a range of sports. As a result, the school has a good participation rate and a record of success in competitive sports, including netball, hockey and football.
- School leaders have not evaluated the impact of pupil premium funding in any depth. However, they have used the funding sensibly to support the relatively few disadvantaged pupils in the school. For example, the school has significantly improved

the attendance of vulnerable pupils, partly through broadening access to the breakfast club.

- The development of a more effective assessment system has also been successful. Staff use this to track pupils' progress and more quickly identify those pupils who will benefit from additional support in their learning.

Governance of the school

- Governors acknowledge that, since the previous inspection, they have not done enough to hold the school's leaders to account for variability in pupils' standards and progress. They have also not checked the quality of teaching and learning with sufficient rigour. Governors now acknowledge that school development planning needs to be more incisive and geared to ensuring good progress for all pupils.
- More recently, governors have taken steps to be more active in their role of both supporting leaders and challenging them to produce more rapid progress. For example, they have followed up developments in the teaching and learning of mathematics.
- Governors have begun to strengthen their roles through a reorganisation of their responsibilities and through improving their ability to analyse data and evaluate the school's progress more meaningfully. Governors have benefited from professional development and are in the process of forging closer links with staff and parents.
- Governors have had appropriate training to enable them to maintain vigilance in safeguarding. They are also clearer in their view of how funding for the small number of pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities, and other disadvantaged pupils, can be used constructively to support their learning and personal development.
- Governors now check pupils' progress more thoroughly. They closely supervise the arrangements for appraising staff performance. Governors are better placed to support the school's leaders in moving the school forwards.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. They are fit for purpose and there are detailed records of a high quality.
- Appropriate policies and procedures ensure that staff are suitable to work with children and know their role in spotting and reporting any possible areas for concern. The inspector spoke to several members of staff who were all able to discuss the content of recent safeguarding training, which has included aspects such as the 'Prevent' duty about combating extremism.
- School leaders work hard to give parents guidance on safety. Staff also give pupils sound advice. This happens in the curriculum and in assemblies. Displays around the school highlight key aspects of safeguarding. These measures ensure that there is a strong culture of safeguarding. The school complements this with strong systems of guidance and support to keep pupils safe.

- Both parents and pupils acknowledge that the school is a safe environment – one which promotes equal opportunity and does not tolerate any discrimination.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- Teaching has been too variable in quality since the previous inspection. Teaching has not been effective enough in helping pupils make the progress they should. This has been evident in the results of recent national assessments.
- Teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve have not been high enough. Neither the most able pupils, nor middle-ability pupils, have made the progress they should.
- Although there is good-quality writing in some of the literacy work, there has not been enough of it in other subjects and topics. Teachers have not taught mathematics and reading effectively enough to bring about rapid progress. Sometimes, the tasks which staff give to pupils are of too easy to enable them to make progress.
- The teaching of phonics has produced variable results since the previous inspection, although training opportunities have led to a recent improvement in pupils' phonics skills.
- In some year groups, the quality of pupils' presentation of their work is still not high enough. There are too many examples of scrappy or unfinished work in pupils' books.
- Teaching is improving in quality. Teachers have received training which has helped them adapt better to relatively recent changes in the curriculum and assessment. Teaching assistants are also having more impact on progress.
- The small number of disadvantaged pupils, including the most able disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities, are making more progress. This is partly the result of better-organised interventions to boost their learning.
- Pupils enjoy many of their lessons, usually when they get the opportunity to work creatively and think for themselves. This has been an improvement since the previous inspection.
- School leaders acknowledge that there is still room to improve teaching further, for example by giving staff in this small school more opportunities to observe effective teaching practice elsewhere.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding.
- The school's leaders have made pupils' personal development as rounded, confident individuals a cornerstone of its work since the previous inspection.
- Although there has not been enough improvement in pupils' work, pupils do love taking on responsibility and being reflective learners. Pupils enthusiastically told the inspector about the school council. The inspector saw examples of speeches which pupils had

prepared for their candidacy for the council. Older pupils have done work on topics such as 'What it means to make a commitment'.

- Older pupils enjoy helping younger ones. The inspector saw this during a 'house day' when pupils were in their houses, with pupils from different year groups working together. Older pupils act as buddies for younger children.
- The inspector also saw an assembly in which a pupil led the collective worship.
- Parents are very complimentary about the quality of care and support the school provides for their children. They know that their children feel safe in school and they value the fact that staff know the children well and act as good role models. A typical parental comment was, 'It is an exceptionally happy, friendly school and this is a well-established platform for developing confident, ambitious learners.' A former pupil wrote, 'It is a very kind and caring school and both the teachers and the pupils look after each other well.'
- Pupils assured the inspector that there is no serious bullying in the school, and records confirm this.
- The school has good links with local agencies when these are called upon to help resolve occasional welfare issues.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils acknowledge that behaviour is 'not perfect' but they do believe that it is good, both in lessons and around the school. Staff and parents confirm this, and the inspector found pupils to be polite and welcoming.
- Attendance has been variable in the past but is now above average. A notable success has been the school's efforts to improve the attendance of the few disadvantaged pupils, which had been a matter of concern following the previous inspection. Through initiatives such as the breakfast club and by working closely with parents, the school has achieved a situation where these pupils are now attending at a higher rate than other pupils nationally. In the current school year, several have 100% attendance.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- Although achievement was judged as good at the last inspection, it has not been high enough for some time. There have been considerable variations in the progress of pupils in reading, writing and mathematics, sometimes between boys and girls and sometimes between different year groups.
- The progress of children in the early years has improved. Where there has been improvement in other year groups, it has been patchy. This has been partly due to lack of sufficiently high expectations in teaching, and partly the result of weaknesses in assessment and in methods of checking the quality of both teaching and progress.
- The majority of children join the school with levels of skill, knowledge and personal development at least typical for their age, and they build on this in Reception. Yet, far

too few pupils have gone on to leave the school with better-than-expected progress in reading, writing and mathematics. In 2016, nonetheless, the school did meet the government's floor standards for attainment in these subjects, which were the minimum expectations. A major reason for underachievement was poor performance in mathematics, although variable performance in other subjects also contributed to underachievement.

- In 2017, the underachievement continued. In terms of progress, reading was just above the national average, writing was below average and mathematics was further below, although there had been an improvement in mathematics on 2016. In the recent assessments, no pupil in the school reached the higher standard of attainment when outcomes in reading, writing and mathematics were put together. Results in grammar, punctuation and spelling were below average. In contrast, science results were above average. There were also inconsistencies in pupils' achievement in key stage 1, including in the phonics screening check, where boys' results were below the national average.
- Scrutiny of pupils' work during the inspection confirmed that some of these weaknesses continue. In parts of the school, such as the early years, there is evidence of good progress. However, higher up the school, too much of the work shows low expectations of what middle-ability and the most able pupils, by far the largest groups in the school, should achieve.
- Some of the work seen is poorly presented or unfinished. There are still weaknesses in spelling. Too often pupils are doing low-level tasks, sometimes similar in their demands across different year groups, so that pupils do not show the progress of which they are capable.
- The school provides some challenge for the most able pupils. For example, the most able mathematicians attend some accelerated classes at the local secondary school. However, staff have not succeeded in building on these efforts in a sustained way.
- Data on the progress of disadvantaged pupils and those who have SEN and/or disabilities is not a very reliable indicator, because they are few in number. However, the work that these pupils do also shows variations in the rate of progress.
- The inspection showed that the school has been trying to address the issue of underachievement. There has been considerable emphasis on developing the skills and approaches of staff in teaching mathematics. Progress in mathematics is improving, and this was confirmed by the 2017 assessment results. However, there are still variations in expectations and the rate of progress.
- There has been improved progress in reading. The inspector heard some younger pupils reading with enthusiasm and confidence. They talked about their favourite books. However, progress is still variable.
- There is some good-quality writing both in key stage 1 and key stage 2. This usually occurs when pupils are writing creatively or in a range of other genres, such as biography and instructional prose. However, there are too few opportunities for older pupils in particular to write in the same depth in other subjects, such as science and geography.

- The success of the school in promoting personal development is evident in pupils' work. For example, pupils write on sensitive topics such as 'explaining my thoughts and feelings'. They also show awareness in their work of other faiths, such as Islam, as well as composing their own prayers in keeping with the school's Christian ethos.

Early years provision

Good

- Children in Reception made good progress at the time of the previous inspection, and they continue to do so. In 2016 and 2017, the majority of children left Reception having achieved at least the expected good level of development and, in some cases, having exceeded it.
- The make-up of the Reception class has varied from year to year. Currently, the majority of children in Reception are most able. Many are already close to the good level of development expected by the end of Reception, although they have been in the school for less than one term. For example, some of the children have made very good progress in their early writing skills and their ability to count. Several speak confidently and articulately, as they did to the inspector. The children are on track to exceed the expected standards.
- The inspector also saw Reception children working enthusiastically with older pupils on a creative project during 'house' activities.
- Reception children are taught for at least some of the time alongside pupils in Year 1. The early years leader manages this arrangement well, so that all the pupils and children benefit. She also has a positive relationship with local pre-schools, providing a range of activities and contacts which help children's confidence when they join Reception.
- Children make rapid progress in their personal development. They quickly learn the conventions of speaking, listening to others and collaborating at work and play.
- Children work and play in a stimulating learning environment. There are good resources both inside and outside the classroom. These are well suited to whole-class, group or paired work, whether involving guided activities or those chosen by the children themselves.
- The children clearly feel safe and confident in school. They behave well and move smoothly into Year 1 at the end of the Reception Year.
- Staff assess the children's progress carefully. Much of the evidence of children's activities is now transferred to an online program. This enables parents to log in, see and even comment on their children's many activities. Parents value this opportunity greatly. There are strong relationships between the Reception class and home, maintained through an open-door policy.

School details

Unique reference number	126446
Local authority	Wiltshire
Inspection number	10042702

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	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	101
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Sarah Till-Vattier
Teacher in charge	Emma Russell (acting headteacher)
Telephone number	01672 861643
Website	www.kennetvalley.wilts.sch.uk
Email address	admin@kennetvalley.wilts.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	28–29 November 2013

Information about this school

- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website. Governors undertook to correct one small discrepancy during the inspection.
- The school is much smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- The great majority of pupils are from a White British background.
- The proportion of pupils in receipt of pupil premium funding and the proportion of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities are both below average.
- The acting headteacher took up her post in September 2017, following the departure of the previous headteacher.
- The school operates a breakfast club and an after-school club.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector carried out learning walks with the acting headteacher to observe all classes. He also heard younger pupils read.
- The inspector carried out a scrutiny of pupils' work from all year groups, again accompanied by the acting headteacher.
- The inspector met with a representative of the local authority to discuss the school.
- The inspector held meetings with several staff. He also had one meeting with the chair of governors and a separate meeting with three other governors. The inspector interviewed a small group of older pupils.
- The inspector looked at a range of documentation, including the school's self-evaluation, the school improvement plan, external reports on the school, attainment and progress data on pupils currently in the school and several pieces of information relating to safeguarding.
- The inspector talked with some parents in the school playground. He also took account of 53 responses to the online questionnaire, Parent View. He read a small number of letters received from parents and a pupil.

Inspection team

John Laver, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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