

Blandford St Mary Church of England Primary School

Birch Avenue, Blandford St Mary, Blandford Forum, Dorset DT11 9QD

Inspection dates

8–9 May 2019

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- Leaders have relentlessly and successfully tackled the weaknesses seen at the previous inspection. As a result, the quality of teaching, learning and assessment is now good.
- Governance is a strength of the school. Governors provide good challenge to the leadership team and hold them closely to account for improvements.
- Leaders are ambitious for the school and drive improvements forward with enthusiasm. Their accurate evaluations successfully identify next steps.
- The improvements made by the school are reflected in better outcomes for pupils. When they leave, pupils are equipped with the skills they need for the next steps in their education.
- Teachers and teaching assistants have high expectations and insist on good-quality work in books. Pupils are rightly very proud of their neat, well-developed work.
- The curriculum is rich and varied. Some subject leaders are new. They are in the early stages of contributing to improvements in their subjects.
- The new approaches to teaching reading motivate pupils to read widely. Pupils use their increasing vocabulary well in their writing. Some aspects of phonics teaching are not yet good enough.
- The teaching of mathematics is effective. On occasion, there is not enough challenge in mathematics lessons for the most able pupils to use their skills to solve more difficult problems.
- Despite good leadership, not all pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) make good enough progress.
- Staff provide a nurturing and inviting learning environment for children in Reception. As a result, children develop strong, positive attitudes to learning and most are prepared well for learning in Year 1.
- Pupils behave well in school. They feel secure and happy because of the strong and respectful relationships.
- Staff encourage pupils to be independent and to have positive attitudes to learning. This prepares pupils well for their futures.

Full report

In accordance with section 13(4) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that the school no longer requires special measures.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Leaders, including governors, should ensure that:
 - the improvements made to leadership and teaching, learning and assessment continue to be sustained
 - subject leaders drive improvement in their areas of responsibility.
- Improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment by ensuring that:
 - teaching, particularly in mathematics, provides good challenge for pupils, especially the most able
 - staff teach phonics well.
- Improve outcomes by ensuring that:
 - the support for disadvantaged pupils and pupils with SEND results in sustained good progress for these pupils.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- The headteacher, senior leaders, the trust and governors have formed a cohesive leadership team. They have successfully identified the areas to improve and tackled weaknesses. Together, they have changed the culture of the school so that high expectations and aspirations pervade. The focus is firmly on providing pupils with the best possible life chances.
- A key strength of leadership is the high investment in development for staff. For example, staff visit other schools to learn from good practice. In addition, leaders provide good-quality feedback to staff about how to improve. This has contributed to clear expectations and consistent approaches towards the planning of teaching and the assessment of learning. All staff who gave a view agreed that leaders use professional development well, and that the school is led well.
- Leaders, including those leading English and mathematics, provide clarity to staff about the expectations for all pupils. Frequent conversations throughout the year challenge teachers about the progress that each pupil makes in reading, writing and mathematics. Therefore, teachers and teaching assistants have detailed knowledge about the needs of each pupil and adapt learning to suit them.
- Leaders ensure that pupils receive a rich and varied curriculum. Because teaching is good, pupils develop knowledge in subjects such as history, geography and science. Subject leaders have started work to develop the design of the curriculum to ensure that learning builds progressively on the skills pupils already have.
- Leaders use the physical education (PE) and sport premium well to extend the sporting experiences open to pupils. More pupils enjoy exciting sports, such as windsurfing. Teams, such as the girls' football team and the dodgeball and hockey teams, take part in sporting competitions. Checking the impact of these activities is at an early stage.
- Leaders identify how the pupil premium funding can be used to help disadvantaged pupils to achieve well. New resources help to improve pupils' reading skills, widen their vocabulary and increase their fluency in numeracy. Leaders check that the use of these resources has a good impact on pupils' progress. Teachers have regular detailed conversations with individual pupils. This provides useful insights about pupils' aspirations.
- There is a strong emphasis on core values and respect for others. For example, pupils discover how democracy works by visiting Parliament. As a result, pupils are confident and have a positive outlook and empathy for others. This prepares pupils well for their futures.
- Parents and carers have increasing confidence in the school. A typical comment from a parent is: 'There have been multiple improvements across all areas in the last two years; teachers act in the best interest of the child.'
- Leaders from the trust provide advice to the leadership team, which has been effective in supporting the school's recovery. This has contributed well to the improvements to teaching, learning and assessment.

Governance of the school

- Governors are skilled, experienced and very ambitious for the school. They are rightly proud of the improvements made since the previous inspection. Following a governance review, changes were made to the structure of the governing body. This has been effective in improving the quality of governance.
- Governors understand their roles and responsibilities and provide strong and appropriate challenge to leaders. For example, governors ensure that they have detailed information about how pupil premium funding makes a difference to outcomes for disadvantaged pupils. Furthermore, focused visits to meet with leaders and to observe activities in school contribute to governors' deep understanding of the strengths and areas to improve.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective and the culture of safeguarding is strong. The designated leader for safeguarding has a good understanding of the measures needed to keep children safe. Where concerns are raised, leaders ensure that they are reported swiftly and that appropriate agencies are involved.
- There are secure systems in place to ensure that staff have comprehensive safeguarding information and training. Staff are vigilant and confident about procedures. Weekly meetings with all staff keep safeguarding high on the agenda and reinforces the message that safeguarding is everyone's responsibility.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Expectations are consistently high across the school. Teachers plan interesting lessons and incorporate new vocabulary at every opportunity. No learning time is wasted. Staff expect pupils to work hard, to try their best and work earnestly.
- During lessons, staff give pupils time to think ideas through and to consider their responses. For example, pupils read books together, as a class, and spend time discussing the images created by the author and the language used. This fosters pupils' development of language, which helps them in other subjects. It also increases pupils' confidence and belief in themselves as learners.
- A strength of teaching, learning and assessment is how well staff check on pupils' understanding before, during and after lessons. Their good understanding of pupils' needs enables staff to plan the most appropriate learning activities for each pupil. Teachers encourage pupils to learn from their mistakes and to spend time learning from them. They give pupils time to look over previous work and to improve it.
- This careful planning of learning ensures that any misconceptions or gaps in pupils' understanding are avoided or quickly resolved. Teaching assistants work effectively and efficiently to provide additional teaching that helps pupils to catch up when they need to. On occasion, the teaching of some technical aspects of phonics is weaker.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- The focus throughout the school on developing good attitudes towards learning encourages pupils to become confident and independent. They are proud of their work and recognise the progress they make over time. Pupils discuss aspects of the school that have improved. For example, a pupil described how the day has been reorganised so that 'we do more learning in the morning, when we are fresher'.
- Pupils are proud of their school. They rise to the challenge 'to be the best I can be'. To encourage strong aspirations, pupils take part in events such as enterprise week. They work collaboratively on the design, creation and marketing of goods and compete for the enterprise trophy. In addition, a wide variety of visitors, such as barristers, architects and tailors, come into school, bringing a wealth of new ideas for future employment routes. Through these activities, pupils develop high aspirations for themselves and for their futures.
- Pupils say they feel safe at school and name adults they would turn to if they need help or advice. Pupils say there is very little bullying and are confident that any issues will be resolved quickly.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Expectations for behaviour are high. The school is calm and ordered. Pupils behave well during and between lessons and at breaktimes and respond quickly to instructions from staff. They show strong respect for each other and for staff and visitors.
- The curriculum helps pupils to develop empathy and understanding for others. For example, pupils learn about a wide range of cultures and religions and about life in other countries, such as in Kenya.
- Pupils enjoy school. Attendance has improved steadily over the past three years and is now good. Few pupils miss days at school.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- The progress that pupils make has steadily improved over the past three years. Most current pupils across the school make good progress in reading, writing and mathematics. Staff have a detailed knowledge of pupils' learning needs. Pupils' books show that significant progress has been made by most pupils from the start of this year.
- Pupils achieve well. Most leave the school with the skills and knowledge they need to thrive. Sometimes, in mathematics, the most able pupils do not have more complicated mathematical problems that require them to think more deeply soon enough. This slows the progress for these pupils.

- Disadvantaged pupils are starting to catch up with their peers. Individual plans and regular, individual conversations with their teachers are proving to be effective in improving pupils' progress. However, differences remain, as some disadvantaged pupils still have ground to make up.
- Leaders have secured improvements in the teaching and learning for pupils with SEND. For example, there is a sharper focus on the frequent review of pupils' progress. Improvements are recent and not yet reflected in better progress for some pupils.
- Pupils gain early reading skills successfully. Over the past three years, increasing numbers of pupils reach the expected standard in phonics by the end of key stage 1. A greater proportion of pupils now reach the expected standard than is seen nationally.
- In subjects across the curriculum, pupils develop good knowledge. For example, Year 1 pupils described the differences in trees following a walk and collection of leaves outside. Vocabulary lists related to specific subjects for each year group extend pupils' vocabulary effectively. Pupils write maturely across a range of subjects.
- In addition, pupils, particularly lower-ability pupils, make good progress in their reading because of this strong emphasis on vocabulary. The move to a new approach for teaching reading skills to the whole class also motivates pupils to read widely.
- Pupils' writing books show that current pupils develop the skills needed to write well, particularly in spelling and grammar. Learning links to previous knowledge and this helps pupils to see how their skills build from one type of writing to another. Pupils are very proud to show pieces of work in their books. This is because books are well-presented, and they can see the progress they are making.

Early years provision

Good

- Children in the Reception class settle quickly and behave well. This is because of the high expectations and the strong, caring relationships staff form with them. Teaching, learning and assessment are good. Staff carefully assess the steps each child needs to take to make good progress from their starting points.
- Engaging stories hook children into learning. The emphasis on vocabulary seen across the school is also evident here. Staff provide children with extra teaching before whole-class lessons to ensure that children understand any new words. This helps all children to make the most of learning activities. This, in turn, helps children to develop positive attitudes to learning.
- Most children reached the expected standard across all areas of learning by the end of their Reception Year last year. Therefore, most children arrived in Year 1 with the skills and knowledge they need to thrive. Strong leadership ensures that careful assessment and a well-designed and interesting curriculum enable children to continue to achieve well.
- Parents appreciate the care shown by staff and the open communication between school and home which contributes to the successful involvement they have with their child's learning.

School details

Unique reference number	141046
Local authority	Dorset
Inspection number	10088266

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	176
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair	Dan Roberts
Headteacher	Daniel Lasbury-Carter
Telephone number	01258 453331
Website	www.blandfordstmary.dorset.sch.uk
Email address	office@blandfordstmary.dorset.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	30–31 March 2017

Information about this school

- The school works with partner schools in the Blandford Education Trust (the trust) and with other schools as part of the Blandford schools' network. The trust works closely with the Diocese of Salisbury.
- The trust, while being ultimately responsible for the quality of education in the school, delegates the responsibility for the oversight of standards to the governing body.
- The school is a Church of England school. A section 48 inspection took place in December 2017.

Information about this inspection

- Several meetings took place with the headteacher and senior leaders, including subject leaders and the leader for pupils with SEND. Together with senior leaders, inspectors observed learning in all year groups and scrutinised a sample of pupils' workbooks.
- Inspectors considered a range of school documents, including the governing body's minutes, the school's self-evaluation, the school development plan and records of assessment procedures. They also scrutinised documents related to behaviour, attendance and safeguarding.
- Inspectors gathered the views of parents at the start of each day and considered the 23 views provided on Parent View, including those expressed on the free-text service.
- Inspectors met with groups of pupils to hear their views and also spoke to pupils informally.
- Inspectors met with the trust's improvement director, the chair of the trust and two governors. There was also a telephone conversation with the chair of the governing body.
- Inspectors took into account the 17 views that staff provided to an online survey.

Inspection team

Tonwen Empson, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Marcia Northeast

Ofsted Inspector

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