

St John and St Francis Church School

Westonzoyland Road, Bridgwater, TA6 5BP

Inspection dates 12–13 March 2015

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected	
	This inspection:	Requires improvement	3
Leadership and management		Requires improvement	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement	3
Achievement of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Early years provision		Requires improvement	3

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement. It is not good because

- Until recently, leaders have not taken effective steps to ensure that all pupils achieve well.
- Pupils have not made fast enough progress until lately. As a result, they have not reached the standards of which they are capable, particularly in reading and mathematics.
- The quality of teaching is not yet consistently good across all year groups, including the early years.
- Teachers do not always plan work that is sufficiently challenging, especially for the most-able pupils.
- The impact of teachers' marking is diminished when pupils are not encouraged to act upon teachers' feedback and guidance.
- Teachers do not provide enough opportunities for pupils to fully develop their English and mathematics skills by practising and applying them in other subjects.
- Middle leaders, some relatively new to their roles, have had limited impact on improving the quality of teaching.
- Leaders do not check systematically that pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is helping to accelerate pupils' understanding of life in modern Britain.
- Teaching in the early years provision does not ensure that all children make good progress in acquiring basic skills, especially in mathematics.

The school has the following strengths

- The headteacher has identified correctly the most important areas to be tackled. Together with the support of the governors, staff, and the academy trust, he has introduced changes that are having a positive impact on improving teaching and pupils' learning.
- Pupils enjoy coming to school. They behave well in lessons and around the school.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. All pupils say they feel safe in school because the adults look after them well.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed teaching and learning across the school, some in conjunction with the headteacher. In addition, they made a number of visits to classrooms, the dining hall, and the playground.
- Meetings were held with pupils, members of the governing body and school leaders. The lead inspector also met with representatives from the Bath and Wells Multi Academy Trust.
- Inspectors took account of the 55 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View), as well as consulting informally with parents at the start and end of the school day. They also took account of the 27 responses to the Ofsted staff questionnaire.
- Inspectors observed the school's work and looked at a range of documents, including the school's improvement plans. They examined information on current pupils' progress, minutes of the governing body meetings, safeguarding procedures and the plans for the use of additional sports funding.
- Inspectors heard pupils read, talked to them in classrooms and evaluated samples of their work.

Inspection team

Sandra Woodman, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Mark Anderson	Additional Inspector
Roy Souter	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- St John and St Francis Church School converted to become a sponsored academy in April 2013. It is part of the Bath and Wells Multi Academy Trust.
- When its predecessor school, St John and St Francis CE VA Primary School, was last inspected by Ofsted, it was judged as requiring special measures.
- The headteacher took up his post in September 2013.
- This school is larger than the average-sized primary school. Pupils are organised in 14 classes, all of which are single year-groups.
- The very large majority of pupils are from a White British background.
- All the children in the early years (Reception classes) attend full-time.
- The proportion of pupils eligible for the pupil premium (additional government funding provided to give extra support to pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals and children who are looked after) is below average. Currently, there are very few children on roll who are looked after.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs is below average.
- The school has been supported by a local leader of education (LLE) from a local school.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Strengthen teaching so that all groups of pupils make good progress, particularly in reading and mathematics, by:
 - ensuring that all teachers set work with the right level of difficulty for all groups of pupils, especially the most able
 - making sure that pupils are encouraged to act upon teachers' marking and feedback
 - ensuring that teachers provide better opportunities for pupils to practise and apply their knowledge and skills in English and mathematics across the range of subjects.
- Improve the provision in the early years by ensuring that teachers have high expectations of all children and plan activities appropriate to their needs and abilities.
- Increase the impact of leadership and management by ensuring that:
 - the skills and expertise of middle leaders are further developed in order to increase their impact on the quality of teaching
 - leaders check systematically that the development of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural skills deepens pupils' understanding and prepares them more effectively for life in modern Britain.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management

require improvement

- Leadership and management require improvement because until recently, leaders have not secured enough effective teaching to enable all pupils to make consistently good progress.
- Leaders, including governors, recognise that achievement should be better, and consequently, there have been considerable staff changes over the past year. Recent appointments have strengthened the quality of teaching, and the pace of improvement is increasing.
- Middle leaders, some relatively new to their roles, are aware of what needs to improve in their areas of responsibility. However, they have had insufficient time to make a significant impact on the quality of teaching. Consequently, their contribution to school improvement is limited.
- Learning across a range of subjects, together with visits and after-school clubs, enriches pupils' experiences, helping to promote their spiritual, moral, and social development. However, pupils do not acquire a good enough appreciation of the range of different cultures, both within school and further afield. This limits their personal development.
- Pupils begin to prepare for life in contemporary western society, for example by gaining experience of democracy through the use of the school council. They show they can express their views and make decisions. Nevertheless, leaders do not check that these personal skills are being developed in ways that deepen understanding and prepare pupils effectively for life in modern Britain.
- Decisive steps taken to improve the quality of teaching, particularly of reading and mathematics, are starting to make a difference. Better rates of progress and higher standards indicate that the school has the capacity to improve further.
- Classrooms have stimulating displays and resources that support learning well. Warm and effective relationships between the adults and the pupils help to create a positive atmosphere for learning.
- Leaders have raised the expectations of pupils' attainment, and have set teachers' targets for improving their practice that are now suitably challenging. Teachers' pay increases are linked to good performance.
- Support for those pupils subject to the pupil premium is organised effectively and the teaching meets their needs. Consequently, their achievement is rising in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Good use has been made of the school sport funding. Pupils participate widely in a range of physical activities and after-school sports clubs. They have increased opportunities to take part in competitions.
- The school promotes equality of opportunity, ensures that there is no discrimination, and fosters good relations. This is clearly demonstrated in the improving progress rates for disadvantaged pupils, disabled pupils and those with special educational needs.
- Most parents are positive about the work of the school. They appreciate the approachability of the headteacher and his staff, and welcome opportunities to become more involved in their children's learning.
- All statutory requirements for safeguarding are met. Training for staff in areas such as child protection is up to date.
- The academy trust has commissioned additional support for the school, including the services of a local leader of education, which is proving effective in improving the quality of teaching and learning. Consultants from the academy trust have provided valuable advice and training for new leaders, helping the school to gain an accurate view of its performance and establish effective plans for improvement.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors are now well organised and well informed about the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement. They have a clear understanding of where the school needs to improve. Increasingly they monitor the school's work for themselves, which enables them to ask challenging questions about why teaching and pupils' achievement are not better.
 - Governors understand how the performance of staff is managed and its links to pay progression. They undertake relevant training provided by the academy trust and the local authority.
 - Governors check safeguarding procedures in school regularly. They are diligent in ensuring that staff receive the appropriate safeguarding training.
 - Governors manage the school's finances well. They know how the additional funds are used to support disadvantaged pupils and provide for improved sporting activities. They know about the impact the funding is having on pupils' achievement and their participation levels in sport.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Typically, they are polite, friendly and very keen to succeed in their learning. On occasions, a few pupils lose concentration when the learning is not sufficiently challenging, which wastes time and slows progress.
- Pupils take great pride in their school, their appearance and their work. In lessons, they usually concentrate, persevere with their tasks, and cooperate well together. These positive attitudes are contributing to the overall faster progress now being made.
- Pupils, their parents and the staff are positive about standards of behaviour. Pupils say they like the school's 'FLOCK' system of rules (fairness, listening to others, outstanding attitudes, care and kindness) and find this helpful in guiding their conduct.

- The school's behaviour log shows that the instances of poor behaviour are infrequent and there have been no recent incidents of harassment. The good support for a small number of pupils with poor behaviour has led to significant improvements and eliminated the need for exclusion.
- Attendance this year is improving. Most pupils attend well and are punctual to school. The school is working hard to raise the attendance of a few pupils and taken effective steps to reduce any unnecessary absences.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. Pupils say that they feel very safe in school because the adults look after them well. All relevant policies are in place, such as, for example, those for protecting children, and systems are followed through carefully.
- Pupils are clear that bullying rarely happens, but it is dealt with quickly and effectively by the adults should it occur.
- Pupils have a clear understanding of how to keep themselves safe, for example on the computer, or on the road through programmes such as 'Bikeability'.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- Over time, there has not been enough good teaching to ensure that all groups of pupils have made good progress.
- Although the teaching has improved recently, teachers do not always plan work with the right level of challenge for pupils.
- Sometimes the most able pupils are not stretched to the full and could achieve more. For example, in one exercise where all pupils had to complete the same subtraction calculations on a number line, the most able completed this task easily but had to wait for the others in the class to finish before moving on. This meant that their progress was delayed, and their learning was not extended as a result.
- When teachers mark pupils' work they provide written feedback that suggests how it can be improved. The impact of teachers' guidance is reduced when pupils are not encouraged to systematically act upon their comments. Teachers develop pupils' skills in reading, writing and mathematics more effectively than previously. However, they do not provide enough opportunities for pupils to practise and apply these skills in other subjects. This limits the depth of pupils' understanding and achievement.
- On the whole, teachers use their subject knowledge to good effect and increasingly devise activities that build on pupils' prior knowledge. Some are now using skilful questioning to check pupils' understanding of what they are taught, re-shaping their explanations, and adjusting tasks to aid pupils' progress.
- Overall, writing is taught well. The increased focus on handwriting and presentation skills is resulting in pupils taking a great pride in their work, leading to higher standards, particularly in spelling.
- Teachers and teaching assistants work effectively with disabled pupils and those with special educational needs as well as those supported by additional funding. The work set for these pupils is well targeted and ensures that these groups are making good progress.
- Teachers are keen to improve their practice. They readily engage in training activities, such as those designed to help them improve their teaching of reading. This is leading to most pupils across the school now generally progressing at a faster rate.

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Not all groups of pupils have made good enough progress over time. This has been the case particularly in reading and mathematics across Key Stage 2. However, the school has now addressed this legacy of underachievement and progress is improving for most groups of pupils.
- In 2014, attainment was below average by the end of Year 6 in reading and mathematics, but in line in writing. It was broadly average in Key Stage 1. Due to more focused teaching, current groups of pupils are on track to attain more highly in line with national averages. Pupils now demonstrate effective skills in areas such as calculation, and complete considerably more work in lessons.
- Pupils' attainment shows improvement in English and mathematics this year. However, pupils do not practise and apply their literacy and mathematics skills as consistently well in other subjects. Consequently, they are not extending their skills fully which limits their achievement.

- The achievement of the most able pupils requires improvement. In 2014, too few of the most able reached above average standards at the end of Year 6 in reading and mathematics. They are not always given hard enough work to do in order to achieve as well as they could. The levels of challenge in their work are not consistent and sometimes they fail to achieve as well as they could.
- Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs make good progress due to the carefully planned support they receive. They are challenged more routinely due to higher expectations of what they can achieve.
- Disadvantaged pupils did not attain as highly as their classmates by the time they left Year 6 in 2014. They were a term behind in mathematics, two terms behind in reading and three terms behind in writing. They were over a year behind other pupils nationally in all three subjects. However, current pupils eligible for the pupil premium make good progress. Their attainment is similar to that of others in school and in line with national expectations for their age.
- Until recently, pupils did not develop their reading skills systematically. They now demonstrate good comprehension skills because of the carefully planned activities that stimulate their thinking. They speak with enthusiasm about their reading across a range of literature. 'Our teacher encourages us to choose interesting books' was one typical comment from a pupil, and others agree.
- More pupils are participating in a variety of sporting activities and competitions, supported by the school sport fund. As a result, there are impressive standards in swimming across the school. Also, pupils have enjoyed developing their physical well-being through a wide range of after-school clubs, such as athletics, tag-rugby, dance and drama.

The early years provision

requires improvement

- Not all children build sufficiently on the skills and knowledge typical for their age, that they have when they join the school, especially the most-able. Overall, they make steady progress, including disadvantaged children and those with special educational needs, but not enough make good progress. The majority start Year 1 demonstrating skills and understanding typical for their age, although few exceed this.
- Leadership and management of the early years require improvement as in the past, leaders have not secured enough good teaching. The newly appointed leader is not yet fully effective although she has begun work on improving provision. Her support for teachers is effective, and teaching, though requiring improvement, is getting better. Teachers make better use of information about children's prior learning to plan activities that are challenging and promote good progress.
- Early reading is taught more systematically now and children's phonics (sounds that letters make) knowledge is developing quickly. Sometimes opportunities are missed to link reading to writing in sentences and to provide suitably harder spellings, in order to challenge the most able to the full.
- Children have ready access to a wide range of resources that engage their interest and stimulate their imagination. However, the range of mathematics activities on offer is more limited and does not develop their understanding of numbers sufficiently. For example, when counting objects up to 20, two children did this quickly and easily by themselves, and could have handled a more challenging task.
- Overall, children behave well and enjoy their learning. Good attention is paid to their welfare and they are kept safe and secure in school by the well-trained adults.
- Parents are becoming more closely involved in their children's learning through better communication with staff. They like the new 'blue progress books' where they can make contributions to their children's progress.

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

Unique reference number	139338
Local authority	Somerset
Inspection number	449858

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	415
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Judith Richardson
Headteacher	Chris Marshall
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
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