

Wantage Church of England Primary School

Newbury Street, Wantage, OX12 8DJ

Inspection dates 24–25 June 2015

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- The headteacher has brought a real sense of purpose and direction to the school since her appointment. She is being very effectively supported by the deputy headteacher and the governing body. Together, they have the highest aspirations for pupils at the school.
- As a result, there have been significant improvements in the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement over the course of the year.
- Since the school became an academy, and particularly over the past year, pupils have made good progress and standards are rising as a result.
- Throughout the school, pupils do particularly well in reading because phonics (letters and the sounds they make) is taught well and pupils read widely for pleasure and information.
- Teachers have high expectations of their pupils. They use questions effectively to check pupils' understanding and deepen their knowledge.
- Children make a good start in the early years because they are well provided for. As a result, more are reaching a good level of development when they move into Year 1.
- Pupils behave well in assemblies, on the playground and around the school, and get on well together. They work hard and are keen to learn.
- The arrangements to keep pupils safe and secure are good and a priority for all the adults at the school. As result, pupils feel safe and well cared for.
- Sport has a high profile in the school. The primary sports funding is used very effectively to provide pupils with high quality coaching in a wide range of sports.
- The renewed governing body has a clear idea of the school's strengths and weaknesses and is making sure that leaders continue to improve the school.
- The executive headteacher and the Vale Academy Trust have provided very effective support and challenge to the school on its journey of improvement.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- The most-able pupils, in particular, do not do as well in writing as they do in reading and mathematics. Too few reach the higher levels at the end of Years 2 and 6.
- Teaching does not always challenge all groups of learners, particularly the most able, to make even faster progress.
- A significant minority of parents do not have confidence in the leadership and would not recommend the school to others.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching and learning throughout the school on the first day of the inspection. Most of these observations were conducted jointly with senior leaders. It was not possible to visit lessons on the second day, except in the Nursery, because all the pupils were involved in the annual sports day.
- The inspection team looked at samples of pupils' work from all classes and listened to them read.
- Inspectors considered the 114 responses to the online survey Parent View and spoke to some parents during sports day. They also took into account the views of 26 members of staff expressed in their responses to a questionnaire.
- Discussions were held with the headteacher, assistant headteacher, senior and middle leaders, groups of pupils, the executive headteacher of the Vale Academy Trust and four members of the governing body, including the Chair.
- The team examined a range of school documentation, including information about the progress of pupils, the school's plans for improvement and policies and procedures in relation to the safeguarding of children.

Inspection team

Graham Lee, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Gillian Bosschaert	Additional Inspector
Glen Goddard	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Wantage Church of England Primary School converted to academy status on 1 October 2013 as a founder member of the Vale Academy Trust. When its predecessor school, of the same name, was last inspected by Ofsted, it was judged to be good overall.
- The school is much larger than the average-sized primary school. There are two classes in each year group in Key Stages 1 and 2. In the early years, there are two full-time Reception classes and a part-time Nursery, providing morning and afternoon sessions.
- Most pupils are of White British heritage.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is below average.
- The proportion of pupils supported by the pupil premium is well below average. This is additional government funding provided, in this school, to support pupils entitled to free school meals.
- The school meets the government floor standard which sets the minimum expectation of pupils' attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of Year 6.
- The current headteacher was appointed in September 2014. An executive headteacher oversees the work of all five schools in the Vale Academy Trust. There have been a number of changes to the teaching staff and the governing body over the last year.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise pupils' achievement in writing, especially for the most able, so that more reach the higher levels of attainment at the end of Years 2 and 6.
- Improve the quality of teaching to outstanding by ensuring that work is always set at the right level of difficulty for pupils of all abilities, especially the most able.
- Improve the partnership with parents so that all have confidence in the leadership of the school to continue the significant improvements that are being made.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher has brought a clear sense of purpose and direction to the school following a difficult first year after its conversion to academy status. She is very effectively supported by the deputy headteacher and a renewed governing body. Together, they have high aspirations for pupils and expect a lot from staff. As a result, there have been significant improvements to the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement.
- Teaching has improved because of a very strong focus on helping new and experienced teachers to develop their skills. Different aspects of teaching are checked regularly by senior leaders and a range of training has been provided. This is supported by robust systems for the management of performance and teachers are very aware that pay rewards are linked closely to their pupils' progress. They have risen to the challenge and morale is high.
- Middle leaders, for example in mathematics and literacy, are playing an increasingly important role in improving the quality of teaching and raising achievement in their areas. The appointment of a new special educational needs coordinator has led to considerable improvements in the support for these pupils.
- Leaders have ensured that information about the progress of individuals and groups of pupils is accurate, being used effectively to identify strengths and weaknesses, and to plan for improvement. Teachers are also making better use of this information to ensure that their pupils are making good progress and to work with leaders to provide additional support for any in danger of slipping through the net.
- Considerable attention is given to the spending of the additional pupil premium funding by both leaders and governors. This year, for example, the money has been spent on additional support for small groups in literacy and numeracy, play therapy and help with school trips. An innovative strategy is the individual mentoring system in place for each of these pupils. Nevertheless, while progress is improving for these pupils, gaps between them and other pupils remain in a number of year groups.
- The improving progress of all groups of pupils demonstrates the school's successful commitment to providing equality of opportunity. Leaders have fostered good relationships in the school and discrimination of any kind is not tolerated.
- The school has focused successfully on providing a curriculum which promotes pupils' literacy and numeracy skills well. They also have opportunities to apply these skills to other aspects of the curriculum, especially in literacy. For example, Year 5 pupils wrote about 'Tutankhamen's treasure' and Year 6 wrote accounts of the life and times of Charles Darwin. The school provides pupils with a wide range of experiences in other subjects, although the visual arts are under-emphasised.
- Sport is a particular strength of the school and the primary sports funding is being used very successfully to provide high quality support from King Alfred's Academy, the secondary provision in the Trust. This has developed the skills of staff and enabled pupils to take part in a wide range of sports. Participation levels are high and there are many opportunities for pupils to take part in competitive events. The annual sports day, which was extremely well organised, enabled pupils to use a wide variety of skills and was greatly enjoyed by all.
- The curriculum and programme of assemblies promote pupils' social, moral, spiritual and cultural development well, although aspects of the latter element are not as strong as others. The school very actively promotes British values such as tolerance and respect. An appreciation of democracy is evident in the elections for the school council and the school's own recent version of the general election. As a result, pupils are well prepared for life in modern Britain.
- The Vale Academy Trust has provided very good support for the school since the conversion to academy status. The executive headteacher has a detailed understanding of the school's performance and provides good support and challenge to leaders. The Trust has also helped the development of governance well, and training and the sharing of expertise across the Trust schools have been mutually beneficial.
- Arrangements for the safeguarding of children meet statutory requirements. They are evident in its policies and procedures, and in the everyday life of the school.
- While most parents spoken to by inspectors were very positive about the school, a number were unsettled by the changes that had taken place and did not feel that the school communicated well enough with them. This was also reflected in the responses to Parent View, as a significant minority expressed a lack of confidence in the leadership and would not recommend the school to others. Inspectors found that the school does communicate regularly with parents through newsletters and has actively sought their views, for example, through surveys and a 'visioning' day. Nevertheless, it is clear that the school has not yet built an effective partnership with this significant minority of parents.

■ The governance of the school:

- Most members of the governing body are new and bring a wide range of experience and expertise. They have a clear understanding of their roles, supported well by the Trust, and are effectively challenging leaders to make the school even better. They have a good understanding of data about the school's performance and how it compares to other schools locally and nationally. They know, for example, that writing is the weakest area of pupils' achievement.
- Governors know about the quality of teaching and how improvements are being made through the regular reports of the headteacher. They have set robust performance management targets for the headteacher and ensure that the systems in place for teachers are equally rigorous. Over the past year, they have supported the headteacher in dealing with underperformance in the school in an uncompromising way.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Pupils are proud of their school and willingly take on the responsibilities they are given. For example, the Year 6 pupils led their mixed-aged teams very well on sports day, showing good leadership qualities and encouragement of younger pupils.
- Around the school, in assemblies and on the playground, pupils behave well. They get on well together and the school is a harmonious community for the most part. There are plenty of activities on the large playground and field, with good levels of supervision. Different groups of pupils play happily together.
- In the classroom, pupils of all ages show good attitudes to learning. They respond well to their teachers and are keen to do well. They take a pride in their work for the most part.
- Pupils work well together in pairs or groups when they are asked to do so. They are also able to maintain concentration well when working on their own. During the inspection, there were very few instances of low-level disruption to learning caused by misbehaviour.
- Most pupils say that behaviour is good in school, although a few said that poor behaviour on the playground is not always effectively dealt with. A small minority of parents also felt that this was the case.
- The school's records confirm that serious incidents of misbehaviour are few and that fixed-term exclusions have only been used very rarely in the face of dangerous behaviour.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. All adults are checked for their suitability to work with children and potential risks around the school and on trips are assessed meticulously. All visitors to the school are closely checked and their details properly recorded.
- Pupils know about different forms of bullying and how to keep themselves safe in a range of situations, such as when using the internet. The school's records show that incidents of bullying are infrequent and they are followed up meticulously.
- A few pupils express reservations about reporting incidents because of potential repercussions. Similarly, a small minority of parents felt that their children were not safe and well looked after and that bullying was not dealt with effectively. However, inspectors found no evidence to support these views, with pupils encouraged to report any concerns within a supportive and caring framework.
- Pupils' enjoyment of school is reflected in their good attendance which continues to be above average.

The quality of teaching is good

- The leadership's strong focus on the quality of teaching has led to significant improvement over the year for both new and experienced staff. The quality of teaching is now good in reading, writing and mathematics and a range of other subjects.
- Teachers enjoy good relationships with their pupils, who respond well to the high expectations of their work and behaviour. Teachers make the purpose of lessons very clear to pupils so they know what they are expected to learn. This sets a purposeful framework for learning.
- The use of questioning by teachers to check pupils' understanding and to consolidate their learning is very effective. As a result, this enables teachers to go over topics that have not been fully grasped or move pupils on more quickly if they are coping easily.
- Teachers provide a range of interesting activities for pupils which generally capture their interest.

Teachers have a better understanding of the levels their pupils are working at, which enables them to set tasks at the right level for those of different abilities. Sometimes, these tasks are not difficult enough, especially for the most able.

- Teachers' marking is much improved over the course of the year. The school's policy is consistently applied and marking is usually helpful in pointing out to pupils areas that could be improved. There are also increasing examples of pupils responding to their teacher's comments to show that they have understood and put the suggestions into practice.
- The skills of teaching assistants have been developed over the course of the year. They play an important role in supporting the learning of pupils who have special educational needs and also groups of different abilities throughout the school.
- Reading is taught well throughout the school and, as a consequence, pupils achieve very well in reading. Phonics is taught effectively from the early years and, thereafter, pupils' comprehension skills and enjoyment of reading are developed well so that they read widely for pleasure and information.
- Since the school converted to academy status, pupils have not been doing as well in writing as they do in reading. Over time, their writing skills lagged behind their reading. In particular, their use of spelling, punctuation and grammar has not developed well enough. Teachers' renewed focus on these elements, allied to opportunities to write widely in different subjects of the curriculum, is improving pupils' skills, although too few of the most able are yet being challenged to reach the higher levels.
- Mathematics is taught well. There is a good emphasis on number skills, with opportunities to regularly apply these skills to the solving of 'real-life' problems. In addition, pupils are taught a range of other mathematical skills. Occasionally, the most able do not make the progress of which they are capable because they are not challenged sufficiently. For example, they sometimes have to complete work that they can do easily before moving on to harder work.

The achievement of pupils

is good

- The achievement of pupils is good because pupils of all abilities have made good and improving progress in writing, mathematics and, especially, reading since the school became an academy. As a result, pupils are increasingly well prepared for their secondary education.
- During its first year, the academy was successful in improving pupils' attainment at the end of Year 1. Pupils reached standards in reading, writing and mathematics that were significantly above average and higher than those achieved in the predecessor school. However, it was not as successful in Key Stage 2, where standards were slightly below average overall and were particularly low in writing. Nevertheless, pupils started to make improved progress in Key Stage 2 in that year.
- In the current year, pupils' attainment is rising and, throughout the school, pupils are working at levels above those expected for their age in reading and mathematics and, to a lesser extent, writing. Of particular note is the much improved performance in spelling, grammar and punctuation as a result of the focus placed on those elements this year. For the most part, pupils are making faster progress across the school.
- The most-able pupils make good progress but, occasionally, the level of challenge is not high enough for them to make even faster progress. The proportion of pupils reaching the higher levels of attainment at the end of Years 2 and 6 compares favourably with the national picture in mathematics and, especially, reading. However, too few do so in writing.
- In the first year of the academy, pupils with special educational needs made slow progress. However, better provision and leadership in this area are ensuring that their needs are catered for and they are making better progress as a result.
- At the end of Year 6 in 2014, disadvantaged pupils were behind others in the school in reading by half a term and adrift of other pupils nationally by one-and-a-half terms. In writing, the gaps were two terms with others in the school and three-and-a-half-terms with others nationally. In mathematics, disadvantaged pupils were one-and-a-half terms behind others in the school and two terms behind others nationally. School information shows that there is some variation between year groups, although these pupils are generally making better progress than they were and gaps are closing in most year groups. In Year 6, pupils entitled to the pupil premium have made faster progress than others in reading, writing and mathematics this year.

The early years provision**is good**

- The early years provision is good and children make good progress from starting points that are changing but are broadly typical for their age. About two thirds of children have been through the school's Nursery and they are better prepared than others in general.
- Children quickly settle in to the welcoming atmosphere in the early years, whether joining in Nursery or Reception, and quickly become confident and enthusiastic learners. There are a good range of activities led by adults, with opportunities for play to develop all aspects of children's learning and social skills.
- As a result of their good progress, the proportion of children reaching a good level of development by the end of the Reception Year is rising, although writing is a relatively weaker area, especially for boys. Children are well prepared for Year 1.
- Teaching is good because the questioning skills of adults have been developed this year and mostly they ask probing questions to make children think for themselves. This was evident, for example, when children were channelling water down a variety of gutter pipes to move sticks. Questions such as: 'Why do you think the stick has not moved?' challenged them to consider the size of the gutter and strength of the water flow. However, these skills are not as well developed in some adults as others.
- Staff link well with other settings to ensure a smooth transition to the school, as well as a range of outside agencies, such as the speech therapist, when necessary. The early years also has an effective partnership with the new parents.
- Children are excited by the activities and behave well both in the inside and outside areas. They quickly adopt school routines. Arrangements to keep them safe and secure are robust and children feel safe.
- The long-term leader of the early years has stepped down as she is retiring and responsibilities are being handed over to the Key Stage 1 leader. Both have a clear idea of the strengths and weaknesses of the early years and improvements are led effectively.

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	140255
Local authority	Oxfordshire
Inspection number	450372

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	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	430
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Dick Peters
Headteacher	Clare Morgan
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected as an academy
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