

Holy Trinity Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School, Halstead

Beridge Road, Halstead, CO9 1JH

Inspection dates 3–4 July 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	This inspection:	Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- The headteacher, deputy headteacher and subject leaders, supported by a strong governing body, have rapidly improved the school since the previous inspection.
- Attainment in English and mathematics is broadly average and is rising. Given pupils' lower starting points, this represents good achievement.
- The proportion of pupils making more than expected progress in reading, writing and mathematics at Key Stage 2 compares very favourably with national averages. Attainment in writing in Year 6 has risen considerably this year.
- Teaching overall is good and all groups of pupils, including disabled pupils and those pupils who have special educational needs and pupils eligible for the pupil premium, are now making good progress.
- Children get off to an excellent start because of the outstanding teaching they receive in the Early Years Foundation Stage.
- Pupils behave well. There have been very few incidents of unacceptable behaviour, such as bullying, in the last three years. Pupils feel safe in school.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- The proportion of outstanding teaching across the school is not high enough and not enough pupils are achieving the highest levels, especially in Key Stage 1.
- Some teachers do not adapt their lesson planning flexibly enough to ensure more-able pupils consistently work hard.
- Marking is not always used well enough to let pupils know what levels they are working at and to raise expectations for their achievement.
- Teachers do not give pupils enough practice in solving 'real-life' mathematical problems in subjects other than mathematics.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 14 lessons, five of which were seen with the headteacher or the deputy headteacher. In addition, the inspectors made short visits to other lessons, looked at pupils' work and heard them read.
- Meetings were held with staff, pupils, the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Governing Body. A meeting was also held with a representative from the local authority.
- Inspectors took account of the 59 responses from parents to the online questionnaire (Parent View).
- Inspectors scrutinised a range of documentation including: nationally published assessment data and the school's own data; local authority review reports; the school's self-evaluation; improvement plans; safeguarding policies; and records and documents relating to the management of teachers' performance.

Inspection team

Justina Ilochi, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Susan Cox	Additional Inspector
Megan Stockley	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This school is smaller than average.
- Most pupils come from White British backgrounds.
- The proportion of pupils eligible for additional funding through the pupil premium is average. In this school, this extra government funding currently applies to pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and children who are looked after by the local authority.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported through school action is below average while the proportion supported through school action plus or a statement of special education needs is above average.
- The headteacher, due to very serious personal circumstances, had been absent from school for prolonged periods between January 2010 and September 2011. His absence and the absence of the deputy headteacher due to maternity leave resulted in a period of turbulence in school. During this time several interim headteachers were in post and there were periods when there was no headteacher.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in English and mathematics.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Make more teaching outstanding and further raise pupils' attainment at the higher levels, especially in Key Stage 1, by ensuring that:
 - teachers regularly adapt their planning to ensure more-able pupils are challenged consistently in lessons
 - teachers' marking always enables pupils to know at what levels they are working and, in so doing, helps raise pupils' aspirations for their achievement
- Provide more opportunities in other subjects for pupils to practise their mathematical problem-solving skills.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Many children enter the Early Years Foundation Stage with levels of skills below those typical for their age. As a result of very strong teaching and excellent indoor and outdoor provision, children make rapid progress.
- Attainment in English and mathematics in Key Stage 2 is average and is improving. Although pupils in Key Stage 1 have attained results that were below average in the last two years, the steady upward trend shown in pupils' work and assessment data demonstrate that their attainment is now broadly average. However, not enough pupils in Key Stage 1 attain the higher levels in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Attainment is improving particularly well in reading. The results of the Year 1 phonics screening check in 2013 show a substantial improvement from last year's below average score. The strong emphasis placed on teaching letters and sounds (phonics) combined with the school's fervent promotion of reading for pleasure is accelerating pupils' progress in reading in most year groups.
- Pupils' progress in all year groups has improved rapidly since the previous inspection. All pupils in Year 6 are making good progress in English and mathematics. A significant number have made more than the expected rate of progress in writing this year, which was an area for improvement from the previous inspection. Well-planned and effective writing projects have raised pupils' attainment in this skill.
- Pupils' speaking and listening skills are exceptionally strong as a result of well-planned opportunities for them to develop their thinking and reasoning and to discuss ideas. For example, in an effective mixed Year 5 and 6 mathematics lesson, pupils were asked to talk to each other in pairs and then to share with the teacher the meanings of the word 'efficient'. The teacher's high expectation that all children could contribute helped to develop their confidence when speaking aloud and addressing the whole class.
- Pupils' achievement in mathematics has been rising for the last three years. The school's data show that pupils' progress in mathematics has improved particularly well for Year 6 pupils. Most pupils are reaching nationally expected levels and a growing number are exceeding them and gaps in attainment are closing rapidly between boys and girls. However, progress in mathematics is slightly behind that in reading and in writing.
- Pupils supported by the pupil premium have not previously been making sufficient gains in progress to secure attainment which is in line with that seen nationally in English and mathematics. In 2012, Year 6 pupils eligible for the pupil premium were 2 terms behind their classmates in English and one term behind in mathematics. However the gap in achievement has closed this year because the funding has been spent wisely on meeting the needs of identified pupils in all year groups, including Year 6, through very well targeted one-to-one and small group teaching.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teaching throughout the school is good overall, with examples of outstanding practice in the Early Years Foundation Stage and in Years 5 and 6. The school has worked very effectively to remove any inadequate teaching through focused training.

- In the Early Years Foundation Stage staff provide a stimulating, happy learning environment, both indoors and outdoors, where children quickly become confident learners and make outstanding progress. Children feel secure and experience a wide variety of enjoyable activities that challenge and motivate them.
- Teachers and other adults foster good relationships and pupils' excellent attitudes to learning. This is reflected in the exceptionally vibrant displays around the school that show the exciting range of activities which stimulate pupils' thinking and creativity.
- Reading is taught well, particularly in the Early Years Foundation Stage and in Key Stage 1. Staff are skilled in helping pupils to become familiar with phonics and to develop high levels of confidence as readers.
- The teaching of English has improved rapidly this year. This is because of the school's focus on teaching literacy skills in all subjects other than English. For example, in a science lesson of mixed Year 1 and 2 pupils, the teacher ensured appropriate attention was given to developing pupils' knowledge of descriptive words and adjectives for the five senses.
- Where teaching is particularly effective, staff use a range of strategies such as one-to-one or group teaching which accurately meet the needs of most pupils, especially pupils who have special educational needs. Consequently, disabled pupils and those supported through school action plus or a statement of special educational needs make good and sometimes outstanding progress.
- Marking is regular and teachers often provide detailed guidance so most pupils are clear about their next steps. Marking in the English and mathematics books indicated that teachers provided good opportunities for pupils to reflect and to correct their mistakes. However, pupils do not always know at what levels they are working, because this is not routinely referred to in the marking.
- Where teaching is exceptional, teachers inspire pupils to learn and tasks are set to stretch their thinking and reasoning skills. In these lessons, teachers help pupils to check their understanding regularly during the lesson and some teachers adapt their lesson plan to meet pupils' different levels of ability. However, in some lessons teachers do not use the knowledge they gain from pupils' self-assessment of their progress to adjust and adapt their plans quickly enough so they can challenge more-able pupils further.
- Subject leaders have not checked that teachers are seizing opportunities to ensure that pupils' problem-solving skills are developed in lessons other than mathematics. This has reduced the proportion of pupils who attain the highest levels in mathematics compared to reading and writing.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Nearly all pupils behave well in lessons. They work diligently to complete tasks and try to do their best. They listen well and engage fully in tasks and activities. Low-level disruption is rare. Pupils say that the behaviour inspectors saw in lessons is typical.
- Pupils are respectful and considerate to each other and this contributes to their good learning. They benefit from a range of opportunities to take on social responsibilities across the school. These duties are taken very seriously and the school ensures good training is in place with a precise focus on pupils' individual and/or group roles.

- Pupils say that they feel safe and understand how to keep themselves safe. Parents who responded to the online questionnaire confirm this view. They say that the playground is safe because of trained 'peer mentors' and 'play leaders' who often lead play for younger pupils. Pupils also said that the "Off/Ok and tell" code ensures that staff are always aware of the safety of pupils.
- The school has an effective behaviour policy which pupils are fully aware of. This sets out secure and appropriate procedures that are used to manage behaviour well, and as a result, there have been no exclusions and incidents of bullying of any type are very rare.
- Weekly assemblies are used effectively by the school to encourage and to reinforce good behaviour and to remind pupils about how to keep safe on the internet. Pupils look forward particularly to the rewards they receive during Friday assemblies for their good behaviour and progress. They enjoy school and attendance has improved considerably in the last year and is now broadly average.

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher and the deputy headteacher are the driving force behind the school's continuing improvement. After a period of leave of absence, during which pupils' achievement declined, the headteacher, with the support of the governing body, has built a strong team of subject leaders within a new management structure. This has ensured that achievement in English and mathematics has risen and the capacity to secure further improvements is secure.
- Good systems and procedures have been developed in the last two years for monitoring and checking that the assessment of pupils is rigorous, robust and accurate. All pupils have been given appropriate and demanding end of key stage targets and subject leaders are fully involved in checking that full use is made of up-to-date assessment information to drive improvements in the quality of teaching and to raise achievement further.
- Systems for managing the performance of staff are rigorous and appropriately tied into the monitoring of teaching quality and pupil progress. Most teaching is consistently good, as a direct consequence of frequent checks on its quality to ensure that it is sharply focused on how teachers can improve classroom practice.
- The school engages well with parents and responds to their requests. Parents have ample opportunities to discuss their concerns with teachers and they are invited frequently to assemblies and to meetings to discuss their children's learning.
- The curriculum is broad and balanced and well supported by a good range of after-school clubs and visits which are well attended and enjoyed by pupils. This actively contributes to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness. There is a strong emphasis on spirituality and reflection which is evident in all aspects of school life and pupils are encouraged to learn about a wide range of faiths.
- The school actively promotes equal opportunities and tackles discrimination by ensuring pupils who are not making sufficient progress are given extra help to achieve well. The extra funding the school receives for the pupil premium has been used thoughtfully for a wide range of purposes to improve pupils' basic skills. School records show that this expenditure has speeded up progress considerably for eligible pupils.

- The school knows its strengths and weaknesses well. Training is sharply focused on pupils' progress and is linked clearly to identified areas for improvement in the school's action plans. Teachers benefit from sharing good practice and the exchange of expertise in aspects such as the use of assessment.
- The school works in a very positive way with the local authority, welcoming the high quality expertise and support they have received through frequent reviews and during the period of staffing turbulence. The local authority now provides effective 'light touch' support.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body has made a strong contribution to the good quality of education the school provides. It is effective in both challenging and supporting the school. Governors know what the school is doing well and where it could do better because they are involved in the school's self-evaluation activities. They have an insightful understanding of information on pupils' progress, and use it to make comparisons with national expectations. They check the use of the pupil premium funding and are rightly proud of its impact on this group's achievement this year. Governors are giving more emphasis to the school's evaluation of teaching and its management of staff performance in relation to pay progression and have rewarded excellent teachers for the quality of their teaching and the progress their pupils make. They ensure that safeguarding arrangements meet statutory requirements and that equal opportunity is promoted well. Governors have been trained to fulfil their duties. They hold the school to account for managing its finances so that the budget is balanced.

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	115066
Local authority	Essex
Inspection number	405561

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	256
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Esme Pickford
Headteacher	Jonathan Smith
Date of previous school inspection	11 July 2011
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