

Countess Anne School, A Church of England Academy

School Lane, Hatfield, AL10 8AX

Inspection dates 17–18 June 2015

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected
	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, other leaders and governors provide strong leadership and management. They have raised aspirations among pupils and staff and this has led to improvements in teaching and achievement.
- Pupils learn in a caring, supportive environment where staff help and encourage everyone to do their best. As a result, pupils have positive attitudes towards their learning, and achievement is improving.
- Standards are rising across the academy. Pupils currently in Key Stages 1 and 2 are achieving well.
- Pupils enjoy school and they behave well. They attend regularly, are proud of the academy and show respect to one another and adults. They enjoy the many opportunities they have to take on extra responsibilities.
- The academy's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. Parents and pupils agree.
- Teaching is good. Teachers know the pupils well and have high expectations for them. As a result, pupils work hard and take a pride in their success.
- Subject and senior leaders play a full part in promoting the academy's values and in developing good practice in teaching.
- The subjects that the academy teaches are very broad and promote pupils' academic achievement and personal development well. There is an exceptionally wide range of opportunities for pupils in musical and sporting activities.
- The provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. They are well prepared for life in modern Britain.
- The Reception class provides children with a good start to their school lives. The activities provided for children help them make good progress.
- The governing body provides effective leadership. Governors have a good understanding of the work within the academy.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Marking and feedback do not always give clear guidance to pupils on how they can improve their work.
- Teachers do not always make sure that pupils act on the advice they are given to improve their work.
- In the early years, teachers do not give parents enough opportunities to contribute their views on how their child is progressing so that teachers only have a partial view of children's development to help them in their planning.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed parts of 14 lessons across all year groups. They made four observations jointly with the headteacher. Inspectors also visited small group 'catch-up' sessions held during the day. Inspectors reviewed the work in pupils' books, talked to them about their work and checked on their progress over time. Inspectors visited after-school clubs and attended an assembly. An inspector heard some pupils in Key Stage 1 read.
- The inspection team observed the behaviour of pupils in lessons as well as at the beginning of the academy day, during playtimes and at lunchtime.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, the deputy headteacher, and teachers with specific responsibilities including for English, mathematics and the early years. A meeting was also held with the academy counsellor. Discussions took place with the School Improvement Partner and the Chair of the Governing Body and other governors.
- Inspectors met formally with a group of pupils of different ages and abilities and with the 'Make Believers', the academy council. They also had a number of informal discussions with pupils around the academy at break and lunchtimes.
- Inspectors took account of the 54 responses to the online questionnaire, Parent View, and the comments of a number of parents when they dropped their children off in the morning and collected them at the end of the day. Meetings were also held with four parents who asked to speak to the inspection team. Inspectors also took account of the 19 responses to staff questionnaires.
- The inspection team observed the academy's work and looked at a range of documentation. This included the academy's self-evaluation and development plan; records of pupils' attainment, progress, behaviour and attendance; documents used by leaders to check the quality of the work of staff at the academy; and systems for protecting and safeguarding pupils.

Inspection team

Frances Le Pla, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Marcia Goodwin

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Countess Anne School, A Church of England Academy, converted to become an academy on 1 October 2013. When its predecessor school, Countess Anne Voluntary Aided Church of England Primary School, was last inspected by Ofsted in October 2009, it was judged to be good.
- The academy is smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- Children in the Reception class attend full time.
- Most pupils are of White British heritage. An average proportion of pupils are from minority ethnic backgrounds. Most of these are Black African. The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is average.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils eligible for pupil premium funding is average. This funding is for pupils in the care of the local authority and those known to be eligible for free school meals.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is average.
- The academy meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 6.
- The academy holds the Investors in People award and is a Voices Foundation Beacon School.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise standards by ensuring that:
 - when teachers mark pupils' work or give them feedback, they make clear what they need to do to make progress in their learning
 - teachers insist that pupils routinely act upon the advice they are given to improve their work.
- In the early years, provide more opportunities for parents and carers to contribute regularly to their child's record of learning so that teachers have a broader view of children's development to support their planning of learning.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are good

- Leaders are improving the quality of teaching and raising attainment. They have created a very positive atmosphere in which all pupils, including those whose circumstances make them most vulnerable, behave well and are keen to learn.
- The headteacher provides strong and focused leadership. All staff who responded to the questionnaire are very supportive of the work of the headteacher and his team to bring about further improvements. As one teacher put it, 'The school is rare. It provides love and support for differing types of children'. There is good capacity for further improvement.
- The leadership of teaching and learning is good. There are effective systems in place for managing teachers' performance. Leaders take action where necessary to improve teaching and they set staff appropriate targets that are linked to improving pupils' progress.
- Subject leaders are effective in their roles and take action to check and improve teaching in the areas for which they are responsible. They have created and implemented action plans that have brought about improvements. For example, in mathematics, the subject leader has introduced a new mathematics programme for teachers to use to improve the way they help pupils master and apply their mathematical skills. She has worked closely with teachers to help them implement the new approach. This is already leading to more rapid progress in the subject.
- The academy's self-evaluation of its effectiveness is accurate and identifies clearly what can be done to improve further. Plans for improvement build on current strengths. Staff make good use of data that show how well individual pupils are achieving. Senior leaders analyse information about pupils' progress carefully and use it to inform discussions with staff. This means that any underachievement is rapidly addressed and extra help given to the pupils who need it.
- The academy makes good use of training opportunities designed to develop teachers' professional skills. For example, teachers are encouraged to visit other schools to see good practice and the teachers in the Reception class have been working on a project with another local school. This has led to sharing of good practice between schools.
- All pupils enjoy the same good opportunities to succeed. The academy uses its pupil premium funding very well to support disadvantaged pupils. Leaders have spent some of the money on providing additional teaching time in classes with the highest number of disadvantaged pupils, and on one-to-one tuition. The funding has also supported an Easter school, and access to the academy counsellor. In addition, the academy has funded some innovative new projects with the money to broaden pupils' experiences. All pupils who wish to learn to play an instrument have access to free group music lessons and all pupils have the chance to learn to ride a bicycle safely and pass their cycling proficiency test. The impact of these initiatives is evident in the good progress made by these pupils.
- The academy makes good use of its primary physical education and sport premium to increase pupils' physical skills and expand the experiences available to them. It has used most of the money to refurbish the swimming pool. This enhances the impressive range of sporting opportunities that the academy provides for pupils of all ages. The academy employs specialist coaches who are employed to run a wide range of activities. During the inspection, older pupils in years 4 and 5 enjoyed cycling, football, tag rugby and dancing in their physical education lesson.
- The range of subjects the academy teaches is very broad and promotes pupils' academic achievement and personal development well. It is enriched by music lessons for all pupils and regular opportunities for singing. As a result, pupils' singing is tuneful and of a high standard. Discovery Weeks every term give pupils the chance to explore a topic in depth. For example, the recent Time and Places week enabled older pupils to study geography and history through looking at the local area, whilst younger pupils learned about Ancient Egypt.

- A wide range of additional activities enhances the curriculum. There are residential visits for pupils, for example, Year 6 visit Snowdonia for a week every year. There is an extensive programme of well-attended after-school activities during the week when pupils get the chance to try their hand at cooking, gardening, dance and a range of sports.
- The promotion of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. There are many opportunities for pupils to reflect. For example, all classes were encouraged to think about their aspirations for the academy and their ideas were displayed in the corridors for all to see and think about. In Year 6, pupils reflected on the ideas of peace and love and depicted their thoughts through artwork
- Leaders foster good relations and tackle discrimination by ensuring that pupils learn about the different beliefs and lifestyles of others and the need to respect them. The academy actively promotes British values. In religious education lessons, pupils learn both about Christianity and about other religions such as Judaism. Pupils are encouraged to take on leadership roles in the academy through, for example, becoming 'Make Believers'. They learn about democracy by devising and carrying out their own pupil surveys to find out the views of others. Together with the curriculum, these opportunities ensure that pupils are well prepared for life in modern Britain.
- Leadership of the early years is good. This helps children to make good progress. The setting makes effective use of all its resources, including the outdoor area, to promote children's learning to the full.
- The academy's child protection and safeguarding systems are very thorough and meet statutory requirements. All necessary checks are made on staff before appointment.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governance is effective. Governors are ambitious for the academy to do well and are clear about its strengths and weaknesses. They know how the academy performs in relation to other schools nationally. The Chair and the Rector visit the academy regularly and know it well. Governors check the work of the academy through visits when they talk to pupils and teachers.
 - Governors carefully monitor the work within the academy and provide an effective challenge to leaders. They receive regular detailed information about the progress, attendance and behaviour of pupils in all year groups. They ask questions about how well groups of pupils are performing and review the academy development plan with leaders every term.
 - Governors are well informed about the quality of teaching and ensure that decisions about teachers' pay are appropriately linked to their performance and responsibilities. They know what leaders do to tackle any underperformance.
 - The governing body manages the finances of the academy well. They look closely at how the academy spends additional government funding and have a good overview of the impact this has on the achievement of disadvantaged pupils.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- The high standard of behaviour expected of all pupils has a positive impact on their learning and progress. There is a very calm and purposeful atmosphere around the academy. At the beginning of the day, pupils arrive promptly and quickly settle in their classrooms, ready to start learning.
- Pupils talk enthusiastically about lessons and other aspects of academy life. They are clearly happy at the academy. They like their teachers and say they do a lot to help them in their learning. Pupils show respect for the learning environment and each other. They do not drop litter, for example.
- Pupils respond well to the opportunities they have to take on responsibility. These include becoming a 'Make Believer' or head boy and girl. They know that, if their behaviour does not meet the high standards expected by the academy, they will not be able to continue in these roles. During the inspection, the

'Make Believers' met as a group and planned the clubs and activities they were going to run at lunchtime for other pupils such as football and 'old fashioned playground games'. Other older pupils enjoyed taking the lead demonstrating dance moves to younger pupils in the 'Tribal Groove' body percussion session held after assembly.

- Pupils are very polite and interested in other people. They work well together, help each other and show a very caring attitude. Pupils are very supportive of others who are disabled pupils or who have special educational needs
- In lessons, pupils are usually attentive and focus well on their learning. They try hard and take care in the presentation of their work. Occasionally, a small number of pupils find it difficult to concentrate and do not settle well to their work. In these instances, they need to be reminded several times by the teacher before they get on with their work.
- The academy provides a great deal of support for pupils whose circumstances make them vulnerable. Senior leaders and the academy counsellor all spend a significant amount of time working with pupils, their families and outside agencies. This enables the very few pupils with significant behavioural difficulties to make good improvements in their behaviour.
- The attendance rate is above average. The academy follows up all absences through well-established procedures.

Safety

- The academy's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. Leaders give high priority to the safeguarding of the pupils in their care, both in the academy and when out on visits.
- Pupils say they feel safe in the academy and the vast majority of parents spoken to, or who expressed a view through Parent View, confirm this view. The academy provides a good range of activities to help pupils learn to stay safe. Pupils are taught how to use the internet and computers safely during assemblies and in lessons.
- A very small number of parents said that there are incidents of bullying in the academy. Pupils say that bullying does occasionally happen but when it occurs, it is dealt with effectively. Inspection evidence shows that the academy deals firmly and effectively with any incidents of bullying.
- Pupils have a clear understanding of different types of bullying, such as bullying on the internet and racially prejudiced bullying. Pupils currently in Year 6 made a very powerful and poignant film about bullying which was watched by the whole academy and many parents. Other pupils, led by the 'Make-Believers,' created an eye-catching anti-bullying display in the corridor as a reminder to all that bullying is wrong. Events such as Anti-Bullying Week provide opportunities for pupils to tackle issues about bullying.

The quality of teaching is good

- Pupils' work, the academy's assessment data and inspectors' evaluations of teaching and observations of pupils' learning, all indicate that the quality of teaching is good and improving. Good teaching is enabling pupils to make good progress and is leading to rising standards.
- Classrooms are attractive and well organised. Teachers use displays well both in classrooms and around the academy, to celebrate pupils' achievement and stimulate their learning. Teachers know the pupils well and have positive relationships with them creating a calm atmosphere for learning. They have high expectations of their classes and are committed to raising pupils' aspirations and self-confidence so that they believe they can achieve well. As a result, pupils usually work hard and take a pride in their work.
- Teachers have strong subject knowledge and are able to explain clearly what they want the pupils to learn. As a result, pupils are able to start quickly on the activities they have been set because they know what they need to do. In an English lesson, for example, after watching their teacher's clear demonstration with the class text, pupils made good progress in their understanding of how suffixes can

be added to words and they were able to apply their knowledge when they went off to work in groups.

- Teachers plan interesting and exciting activities, which engage the pupils in learning and help them to apply their skills in different contexts. For example, Year 6 pupils really enjoyed making and launching their rockets and they were able to use their mathematical and scientific knowledge to decide what equipment they needed and estimate how far they would fly and in which direction.
- Teachers make good use of learning support assistants, and additional staff make a good contribution to pupils' learning. Targeted support by learning support assistants often helps disabled pupils and those with special educational needs to concentrate as well as to make progress. Teachers and learning support assistants use questioning well to check pupils' understanding and to probe their learning. For example, in a mathematics lesson, the teacher asked, 'What do you know already about where the hands are at half-past?' As a result, they were able to use their own knowledge to tell the time correctly.
- The teaching of reading is good and all teachers place strong emphasis on developing pupils' reading skills. Teachers and learning support assistants are well trained in the teaching of phonics (how the sounds in words are represented by different letters). Reading sessions are planned thoroughly and staff match work well to the next steps different groups need to make in their learning. Those who need extra help with their reading receive support in small groups. Teachers encourage pupils to read often and older pupils enjoy the opportunities they have to read their own books in the silent reading sessions after lunchtime.
- The teaching of mathematics is good and teachers have enthusiastically taken on the new approaches to teaching mathematics introduced this year. They encourage pupils to master the skills they are learning before moving on to new work and use their knowledge to solve real life problems, for example, using knowledge of place value of numbers to increase and decrease percentages.
- Teachers encourage pupils to write regularly and provide interesting and topical themes for them to write about. For example, in the work during 'C Annes Week' older pupils produced some detailed writing when they created a script for a film set they produced. In the Reception class, teachers take every opportunity they can to encourage children to write in the different activities they do, and this helps them make good progress.
- Teachers mark pupils' work regularly and often praise them for what they have achieved. However, the comments do not always give pupils clear enough guidance about what they need to work on next to make faster progress. Sometimes, when pupils are given extra tasks to work on, teachers do not always ensure that pupils act on their advice.

The achievement of pupils is good

- Senior leaders have taken firm action to raise achievement and identify areas where pupils could make faster progress. Pupils' books and the academy's own data show that almost all pupils currently in the academy are making at least the expected amount of progress in reading, writing and mathematics and many are making better progress. As a result, standards are rising. In 2014, the proportion of pupils who achieved the expected level in reading writing and mathematics was close to the national average. Current academy data indicate that standards will rise to above average in 2015.
- Some children join the Reception class with attainment that is broadly typical for their age but others have weak skills in speaking, reading, writing, mathematics and understanding of the world around them. Children achieved well to attain above-average standards by the end of the Reception year in 2014. Children currently in the Reception class are also making good progress.
- Achievement in reading is improving. In the Reception class and in Key Stage 1, pupils make good progress in learning about the sounds that letters make (phonics). Pupils in Key Stage 1 who read to an inspector, had developed good skills for tackling new words and showed a clear understanding of the story. In 2014, results in the Year 1 screening of phonics were broadly average.

- In 2014, standards in reading and mathematics were broadly average at the end of Year 2 and in writing they were below average. These results represent good progress from pupils' low starting points at the end of the Reception year.
- Standards in reading and writing were average at the end of Year 6 in 2014, and the proportion of pupils who made expected and better than expected progress was in line with schools nationally. In 2014, standards in mathematics at the end of Year 6 were above average. The proportion of pupils who made expected and better than expected progress was above average compared with schools nationally.
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- Across the academy, pupils are currently making rapid progress in mathematics. This is because the academy's increased emphasis on spending time to ensure pupils have a secure understanding of what they have learned and on problem-solving activities is helping pupils to make even better progress. Pupils are making good progress in reading and writing.
- Results in English, grammar, punctuation and spelling were average for pupils in Year 6 in 2014.
- In 2014, girls did much better than boys in all subjects at the end of Year 2 and in writing and English grammar, punctuation and spelling in Year 6. The academy has already taken action to raise boys' achievement by providing more exciting tasks to engage boys' interest in writing. The academy is also placing an increased focus on grammar, punctuation and spelling to improve accuracy in writing. Academy data suggest that boys have made faster progress and this year they will do as well as girls.
- Disadvantaged pupils did not do as well as their classmates at the end of Year 2 in 2014. At the end of Year 6, they did better than their classmates. They were almost a term ahead of their classmates in reading, a year ahead in writing, and a term and a half ahead in mathematics. They made similar progress to the rest of their class in reading, and mathematics but much better progress in writing. Compared with pupils nationally, disadvantaged pupils were almost half a term behind in reading, two terms ahead in writing and one and a half terms ahead in mathematics. They made better progress than pupils nationally in writing and mathematics, and similar progress in reading. Disadvantaged pupils currently in the academy are making similar progress to their classmates in reading, writing and mathematics and gaps are closing.
- Pupils from Black African heritage do as well as their peers because the academy takes care to ensure that all pupils are valued and encouraged to achieve their best. There are no significant differences between the achievement of pupils with minority ethnic backgrounds and that of other groups.
- Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs are making good progress in reading, writing and mathematics. This is because staff understand and address the individual needs of those pupils who need more help.
- The most-able pupils make good progress. In 2014, the proportion reaching the higher levels in reading writing and mathematics in Year 2 was close to average. Similarly, in 2014, the proportion of Year 6 pupils gaining a Level 5 in reading, writing and mathematics was average.

The early years provision

is good

- Children settle into school life and quickly become used to the academy's routines. Children start the day happily and productively meeting with their key worker and doing their 'busy fingers' activity. They enjoy sharing their learning with adults. During the inspection, for example, they talked about how they were making cakes by moulding sand into shapes in the sand pit. They make good progress from their different starting points and are well prepared for moving up into Key Stage 1.
- Staff keep children very safe. Children behave well, and work and play cooperatively, happily taking turns and sharing. They are confident, enjoy school and the activities provided for them, especially outdoors and in their role-play area.

- Leadership and management of the early years are good. Staff make good use of the accommodation by providing exciting activities in all the different areas and this enables children to learn well in all the required areas of learning. Staff use the outdoor area effectively to extend children's learning, both through adult-led activities and those that children choose for themselves.
- Children have access to a good range of resources to support their learning. The introduction of tablet computers this year has supported work in phonics and led to better progress. During the inspection, the children enjoyed talking about the textures and feel of feathers and sticks they had. This interesting activity led to children using their good phonics knowledge to write new describing words such as 'silky' and 'rough'.
- Teaching is good. Teachers provide a broad range of experiences that interest the children. For example, as part of the work on the book 'Owl Babies', children visited a Falconry Centre to see owls for themselves and this led to a wide range of activities back in the class. During the inspection, children were finding out about the food owls eat, making owl masks and models of owls, all of which helped them to make progress in their learning.
- All children, including disabled pupils, those who have special educational needs, and those for whom English is an additional language, make good progress. This is due to the good leadership and management of the early years provision. There are good systems in place for assessing what children can already do when they join the academy including discussions with the teachers at the pre-schools that the children attend.
- Assessment is regular and systematic. Teachers use assessment well to plan what children need to learn next. All adults in the setting help to observe and record children's progress in 'learning journals'. Staff regularly inform parents about their children's progress. They invite parents to come into the academy to meet with their child's key worker and talk to them about their work. However, there are too few opportunities for parents to contribute their own observations about what their children can do at home. This means that teachers sometimes have only a partial view of children's development to help them when they plan new learning.

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	140238
Local authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	450378

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	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	207
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Murray Gifkins
Headteacher	David Lodge
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
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