

Sheering Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School

The Street, Sheering, Bishop's Stortford CM22 7LU

Inspection dates	12–13 April 2016
Overall effectiveness	Good
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Good
Early years provision	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- The school has improved significantly since the last inspection and is well placed to develop further. The headteacher has high expectations and with good support from the deputy headteacher and governors is driving improvements forward, especially in improving teaching and pupils' outcomes.
- Leaders promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development effectively, as well as their physical well-being.
- Teachers and teaching assistants work well together to successfully meet the learning needs of different pupils. They use well-chosen resources effectively. They have good relationships with pupils and manage behaviour well.
- Pupils' behaviour in lessons and around the school is good. Effective welfare arrangements promote pupils' good personal development and ensure they are safe. As a result, they respond well and enjoy school.
- The school's accurate records of pupils' achievement, work in pupils' books and lessons show that the progress of current pupils is good in reading, writing, mathematics and in a range of other subjects. The school is successfully filling the past gaps in pupils' learning.
- As a result of good leadership and good teaching in the Reception class, children are now making good progress in the early years. This is leading to a rise in the proportion of children who are set to reach a good level of development at the end of the Reception year.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Expectations for learning are not consistently high in all classes.
- Leaders are not providing governors and the local authority with a clear view of the progress of different groups of pupils.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Develop the quality of teaching and assessment further in order to raise pupils' achievement by making sure that teachers set consistently high expectations for pupils' learning across the school.
- Ensure that leaders provide governors and the local authority with a clear view of the impact of teaching on the achievement of different groups of pupils.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management is good

- The headteacher is determined to drive improvement forward and is successfully communicating high expectations to the staff and pupils alike. Senior leaders, governors, and teachers with leadership responsibilities are clear about their roles and are committed to raising achievement and developing teaching further.
- The school's own evaluation of its strengths and weaknesses is accurate. Leaders use the outcomes of this process to identify the right priorities for development and work hard to bring about continuous improvement in teaching, learning and pupils' outcomes. Clear systems underpinning all aspects of the school's work have led to improvements in teaching.
- Senior leaders, with the support of a national leader of education (NLE), rigorously monitor teaching to identify and tackle weaknesses and ensure staff who need support benefit from regular coaching. Successful staff training, for example in phonics, has led to improved teaching and learning. In discussion, newly qualified teachers said they have good opportunities to develop their skills through training and observing good practice in local schools. As a result, they are more confident in teaching and are continuing to improve their practice.
- The school has set ambitious targets for the progress it expects pupils to make and it has thorough systems for tracking their progress. As a result, leaders clearly identify individuals and groups who need extra help and those aspects of provision which need to be improved. However, leaders are not presenting governors or the local authority with a clear view on how well various groups of pupils are learning and the progress they are making over time from their different starting points. This has recently led to a confusing picture about pupils' achievement, which resulted in the local authority issuing a warning notice to the school because of an apparent decline in standards.
- The school has worked closely with the NLE to put this right and provide a more accurate picture of the good progress pupils are making. Leaders make good use of information about pupils' progress to pinpoint where further improvements could be made and to ensure that all pupils have equal opportunities. They have created an environment where pupils can flourish, and they successfully tackle any form of discrimination or harassment by promoting good relationships throughout the school.
- Leaders with responsibility for subjects, including mathematics and English, are making a good contribution to school development. They have recently implemented new systems of assessment for tracking pupils' achievement within their subjects. The special educational needs coordinator is providing good leadership to ensure that pupils who have special educational needs make the same good progress as their peers. The early years is now led very well.
- The curriculum is broad, balanced and relevant to the needs of different pupils. It has a good emphasis on developing pupils' communication, language, literacy and numeracy skills through, for example, daily opportunities for developing reading and additional enrichment activities in mathematics. It also covers a wide range of topics and subjects delivered in lessons, with good opportunities to enhance pupils' learning further through special events, a wide range of clubs, visitors to the school and trips to places of interest, including a residential visit.
- Leaders promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well. British values are widely promoted across the school with clear links to Christian values which are displayed in classrooms and along corridors.
- The school has received good support from the local authority and from the NLE who carries out regular reviews of the school's work and its impact on pupils' learning and development.
- The school makes good use of the pupil premium funding to narrow the gap between the attainment of disadvantaged pupils and other pupils nationally. It uses the funding to provide support in small groups and one-to-one interventions to ensure that these pupils are achieving as well as other pupils.
- Leaders are using primary sports funding well to promote pupils' physical development and well-being. There has been a significant increase in after-school clubs since the last inspection which are very popular with pupils. There has also been a similar increase in pupils' participation in physical activities, including competitions with other schools. Teachers have worked alongside the leader for physical education to develop their own teaching skills.

■ The governance of the school

- The governing body has been strengthened since the last inspection and governors are now bringing greater expertise to their role. Governors hold leaders to account and visit the school regularly to check on how much improvement has been made. They have a good understanding of data and are generally well informed about the effectiveness of the school and what could still be improved. They have a clear view of the impact of spending of pupil premium and primary sports funding on pupils' learning, progress and physical well-being. However, they are not presented with clear enough information on the progress that other groups of pupils are making, such as the most able, from their different starting points.
 - Governors have an accurate view about the quality of teaching and its impact on pupils' learning. They successfully oversee the school's rigorous arrangements for managing teachers' performance so that good teaching is recognised and weaknesses are tackled.
 - Governors oversee the promotion of spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and British values effectively, paying careful attention to pupils' health and safety. They ensure that safeguarding meets requirements and that policies and procedures are up to date.
- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. The school works closely with parents and outside agencies to establish a safe culture for pupils. Effective procedures are in place and staff are well trained in child protection and safeguarding.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good

- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment across the school, including in the early years, has greatly improved since the last inspection, when it was found to require improvement. The school's own record of teaching, the work in pupils' books and the rapid increase in their rates of progress show that teaching and learning are now good.
- Teachers have established a very positive atmosphere for learning, as seen in the attractive displays in classrooms and along corridors, with numerous examples of pupils' work and some useful information to extend their learning. Teachers and teaching assistants maintain good relationships with pupils and manage their behaviour well, which promotes good learning and progress.
- Pupils use well-chosen resources effectively including dictionaries, reference books, number lines, real objects to refer to and laptop computers (used safely) for research.
- Teachers use probing questions to deepen pupils' thinking as seen, for example, in guided reading lessons to develop the use of poetic language to improve writing. However, work in pupils' books shows that expectations for learning are not consistently high in all classes. In discussions about their learning, a few pupils said the work was sometimes too easy.
- Teachers and teaching assistants provide good support for disadvantaged pupils, those who have special educational needs, pupils who need to catch up quickly and those learning English as an additional language. They carefully explain the tasks to the pupils they work with, and teachers make sure that teaching assistants are clear about their role in working with pupils.
- The teaching of the basic skills of literacy and numeracy are good and teachers' careful planning ensures that pupils' build on these skills in other subjects. There were many examples seen of interesting and challenging work in religious education, history, geography, art and science.
- In English, pupils have good opportunities to explore a variety of texts and write for a range of purposes. Teachers also provide pupils with stimulating activities to develop and consolidate their literacy skills in other subjects such as religious education, science and humanities.
- Teachers are providing more opportunities to deepen pupils' mathematical understanding by applying their skills to solve real-life problems, for example in using their knowledge of decimals to solve money problems.
- The school has implemented a well-conceived assessment policy, and teachers' assessments of pupils' work in reading, writing and mathematics are accurate. There are good procedures for comparing teachers' assessment judgements within the school and for comparing them with those in other schools. The school has developed and implemented new assessment systems to track and record pupils' achievements in non-core subjects throughout the school. They are now exploring different ways of further demonstrating pupils' achievement.
- Teachers usually follow the schools' marking policy in providing pupils with good advice on what they have done well and how they could improve.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare is good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good. Pupils are clear about what they need to do to be successful learners. They know it is important to listen carefully, to concentrate, and to work hard in lessons. Pupils show they are confident to talk to one another and respect each other's views throughout the school.
- Pupils are very positive about how the school supports their personal development and they make good progress in their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. They gain a clear understanding of British values which are promoted by, and closely linked to, the school's Christian values. For example, pupils show respect for the rule of law and consideration for others, by respecting the commandments, following classroom rules and keeping areas of the school tidy. In discussion, pupils spoke sensitively about the importance of respecting those from different cultural traditions and beliefs.
- Older pupils readily support and guide younger ones, for example, as playground leaders.
- Pupils are encouraged to be reflective – to think about their learning and consider the effects of their actions on others. In discussion, pupils were able to explain the values of mercy, forgiveness and kindness, and to show how these were linked to tolerance and good relationships.
- Effective welfare arrangements, through good pastoral support and close work with other agencies, promotes pupils' emotional and physical well-being. The effective curriculum and Christian ethos also successfully promote pupils' personal development.
- Pupils have a good understanding of bullying, including cyber-bullying, and they know the importance of using the internet safely. Pupils and parents say that there is not as much bullying now as there was in the past and any bullying is dealt with effectively. Pupils feel safe in school and are confident that staff deal with any concerns they may have.
- The school premises and accommodation are secure, and high levels of staff supervision throughout the school day ensure pupils' safety.
- Children in the Reception class are happy, they settle into their routines and stay safe.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Pupils' behaviour in lessons and around the school is good and the school is orderly and calm. Disruption in lessons is rare as pupils focus on their learning and follow instructions carefully. However, behaviour is not outstanding because sometimes pupils ignore instructions to walk in from the playground quietly and pupils' switch off from their activities if the work is too easy.
- Systems for managing behaviour have been strengthened since the last inspection with the consistent application of rewards and sanctions, which pupils respect. Pupils say that behaviour has improved because staff expect good behaviour and pupils want to do well. They listen carefully to one another and their good behaviour makes a strong contribution to their learning.
- Attendance has improved since the last inspection and is now above average because the school successfully tackles persistent absence and promotes good attendance. Pupils arrive punctually and well-prepared for lessons.

Outcomes for pupils are good

- Pupils' outcomes are good because the school is successfully raising pupils' achievement. The school's reliable information from the tracking of pupils' progress over time, work in pupils' books and in lessons show that current pupils are making rapid progress. They are also filling past gaps in their learning in a range of subjects including English and mathematics. As a result, pupils are now well prepared for the next stage of their education.
- Children's attainment on entry varies from year to year because year groups are small. In 2015, it was broadly average and it is above average for current children. From their various starting points, children in the Reception class are now making good progress. The proportion of children who reached a good level of development at the end of the early years improved greatly in 2015, showing that children had made at least the expected amount of progress. The work that children are currently doing shows further improvement with far more children working at least in line with the skills typically found for their age across the areas of learning.

- Improved training in phonics (the sounds that letters make) and the introduction of improved methods for teaching reading and writing have led to considerable improvements in pupils' achievement in phonics, reading and writing. The school's results in the Year 1 screening of pupils' knowledge of phonics dipped in 2015 to below average, and inspection findings show that as a result of the improved training this is improving significantly, with a high proportion of pupils now working above expectations for their age.
- Standards at key stages 1 and 2 vary significantly from year to year because year groups are much smaller than average.
- At the end of key stage 1 in 2015, standards were broadly average; they were above average in reading and mathematics and below average in writing. Standards had risen steadily from 2014 when they were below average for all subjects. In 2015, nearly all pupils made at least expected progress, with many making above expected progress. The school is successfully tackling a legacy of underachievement, established when they were in the early years, for pupils currently in key stage 1. It is effectively filling gaps in pupils' learning so that outcomes are rapidly improving. Pupils currently in Year 2 are making rapid progress from their low starting points at the end of their Reception year. They are on course to move to above the expectations for their ages in reading, writing and mathematics.
- The school's results at the end of key stage 2 in 2015 were below average in reading, writing and mathematics. Nevertheless, attainment rose slightly from 2014. The school added considerable value to the progress pupils were making across all subjects in 2015, which was the best year's progress recorded for all groups of pupils.
- The school's accurate tracking information shows that the progress of pupils is continuing to improve in reading, writing and mathematics at key stage 2. The school has set ambitious targets for all pupils, and half-termly checks on the progress of different groups show that those who did less well last year are now making faster progress as a result of the extra support the school has put in place.
- The gap between the attainment of disadvantaged pupils and others nationally, as well as compared with their classmates, narrowed considerably in 2015. This was because the school provided carefully targeted support. Disadvantaged pupils are currently continuing to benefit from this support and are making good progress.
- The school is providing good support for pupils who have special educational needs to ensure they are making good progress. Pupils who need to catch up quickly and those for whom English is an additional language are also making good progress because good support is provided to meet their needs.
- The most-able pupils are making good progress from their higher starting points especially in mathematics, where for the first time a few of these pupils are on course to reach the highest levels in their forthcoming national tests. Pupils' books show that the most-able pupils are making at least expected progress, although occasionally the tasks they are given are too easy, which a few pupils confirmed in discussion.

Early years provision

is good

- The early years leader has been very successful in eliminating weaknesses in teaching and improving the outdoor and indoor learning environments since the last inspection. Children now benefit from consistently good teaching, and from a wide range of high-quality resources to support learning such as the outdoor all-weather surface, the pet shop, the phonics wall, and the horticulture area, which they greatly enjoy. The early years leader is ensuring that the recently introduced online assessments are used well by staff, with good contributions from parents, to record and track the small steps of progress children are making in all areas of learning.
- As a result of this good leadership and good teaching in the Reception class, children are now making good progress in the early years. In 2015, outcomes at the end of the Reception year were above those nationally with an above-average proportion of children reaching a good level of development. Currently, the proportion of children who are set to reach a good level of development at the end of Reception is continuing to rise. Children are making good progress in all areas of learning. In phonics, they are making secure links in the sounds letters make and blending these sounds to read and write words accurately. They know that plants grow from the seeds that they have planted and they measure the different heights of each plant as they grow, correctly using mathematical language to identify the tallest and the shortest plant. In role play, they take turns to 'bring their pets to the veterinary surgery' and explain the symptoms to the 'vet' who carefully treats and administers the medicine.

- Children greatly enjoy their learning and rapidly build confidence because staff provide a rich range of activities for them and display children's work and celebrate achievements in all their activities. Children in the Reception year are well prepared for when they move into Year 1.
- Staff have a good understanding of how children learn and they work very well together to promote all areas of learning, especially the children's communication language and social development. Staff work closely with outside agencies to support the very few children who have special educational needs to ensure that they are making the same progress as other children.
- Staff work closely with parents to support their children's learning and well-being, for example in providing training to show them how to use the online assessment system. In discussion, all parents spoke highly of the early years provision and the impact of this on the good progress their children were making.

School details

Unique reference number	115099
Local authority	Essex
Inspection number	10011790

This inspection 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	105
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Linda Ainsworth
Headteacher	Lorna Brittain
Telephone number	01279 734210
Website	www.sheeringschool.org.uk
Email address	admin@sheering.essex.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	23–24 January 2014

Information about this school

- The school is much smaller than most primary schools
- Almost all pupils are from White British backgrounds and the proportion who speak English as an additional language is much lower than in other schools.
- The proportion of pupils supported by the pupil premium is broadly average. The pupil premium is additional funding provided by the government for pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals and children looked after by the local authority.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs or disability is above average.
- More pupils than in most other primary schools join or leave part-way through their primary education.
- The school meets the government's floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress by the end of Year 6.
- Since the previous inspection the school received a monitoring visit by Ofsted to determine how much progress it was making in meeting its areas for improvement. There has been a high turnover of staff, and the early years leader was appointed as deputy headteacher in September 2015. The school works closely with a national leader in education who is the headteacher of St Bernadette's Catholic Primary School, Milton Keynes.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector visited a variety of lessons and activities, most of them jointly with either the headteacher or the deputy headteacher.
- The inspector heard a few pupils read and looked at samples of pupils' work in different subjects across the school, including children's work in the Reception class.
- The inspector looked at data and the school's tracking information to determine the progress pupils are making in all year groups, including in the early years.
- The inspector considered 48 responses to the Ofsted online questionnaire, Parent View, looked at some written responses received from parents during the inspection and held informal discussions with a few parents who brought their children to school. Although there were no completed staff questionnaires, the inspector held informal discussions with staff and held a meeting with newly qualified teachers to seek their views.
- The inspector also held meetings with school leaders, six members of the governing body, a representative of the local authority and with two groups of pupils.
- The inspector looked at a range of documentation including: the school improvement plan and the school's self-evaluation of its own work, minutes of governing body meetings, records of behaviour and attendance, and safeguarding policies and procedures.

Inspection team

Declan McCarthy, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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