

High Bickington Church of England Primary School

High Bickington, Umberleigh, Devon EX37 9AY

Inspection dates

8–9 November 2016

Overall effectiveness	Requires improvement
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Requires improvement
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Requires improvement
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Requires improvement
Outcomes for pupils	Require improvement
Early years provision	Requires improvement
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- The changes resulting from the federation in 2014 have stretched the capacity of leaders to maintain a good standard of education for pupils.
- Leaders have not provided teachers with sufficient challenge or precise enough guidance to ensure that they help all groups of pupils to make good progress.
- Leaders have not been thorough enough in making checks on the school's effectiveness. They have not reacted quickly enough to tackle weaker aspects of the school's work.
- Teachers do not always use assessment effectively to help pupils to improve, particularly in mathematics.
- Leaders have not acted swiftly enough to tackle the persistent absence of a few pupils.
- Teaching is inconsistent across year groups and between subjects, including in the early years.
- Teaching in the early years and in key stage 1 does not always help pupils to develop the skills of working independently.
- Not all teachers provide the most able pupils with enough challenge. This hampers the progress of some pupils, including children in the early years.
- The governors' challenge of leaders has not brought about swift improvement.

The school has the following strengths

- The governing body's recent actions have strengthened leadership capacity. Weaknesses are now being tackled effectively.
- Particularly effective teaching in Years 4, 5 and 6 enables pupils to catch up quickly.
- Good teaching fosters a love of reading. Pupils make good progress and achieve highly in this subject.
- The breadth of curriculum experiences and wide range of clubs develop pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well.
- Parents are delighted with the school. Those who responded to the online questionnaire were unanimous in saying that their children are happy and safe.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of leadership and management by ensuring that:
 - leaders' plans for improvements include measurable actions that increase the urgency with which leaders tackle pupils' progress
 - senior leaders regularly make thorough checks on pupils' progress as well as their attainment, and act swiftly to tackle any inconsistencies that exist
 - leaders promote the highest expectations for pupils' progress and provide teachers with the ongoing challenge and guidance that they require
 - the governing body strengthens the rigour of its challenge to check the impact of leaders' actions in improving outcomes for all groups of pupils, in a timely manner.
- Improve the quality of teaching so that it is consistently good or better by ensuring that:
 - teachers make better use of the information about what pupils know, can do and understand to help pupils make rapid progress, including in the early years
 - all teachers provide the most able pupils with the challenge and support they need to make consistently good progress, particularly in mathematics.
- Improve the personal development, behaviour and welfare of pupils by:
 - leaders working effectively to improve attendance rates for pupils, particularly for those who are persistently absent from school
 - teachers in the early years and in key stage 1 setting activities that develop pupils' ability to work independently.

An external review of the school's use of the pupil premium should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership may be improved.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- The federation in April 2015 resulted in a change of leadership structure. Efforts to secure good-quality teaching and learning have not been effective enough. Although pupils catch up by the time they leave the school, not all pupils are making the progress of which they are capable.
- Leaders carry out their statutory duty to manage the performance of teachers. However, leaders' expectations are not made explicit enough to bring about rapid improvements. In particular, the advice and support provided to newly qualified teachers has not always been effective. The improved capacity for leadership, since September, is tackling this issue.
- Until recently, leaders' checks on the quality of teaching have not had a sharp enough focus on improving outcomes for all groups of pupils from their different starting points. Changes this term have addressed this issue. There are encouraging signs of swift improvements. Leaders are providing advice and guidance to teachers in a timelier manner. However, inconsistencies in teaching still remain.
- Leaders' plans for improvement do not reflect the urgency needed to accelerate some pupils' progress in some subjects and year groups. Moreover, leaders do not make frequent checks of books and teachers' assessments to ensure that actions are effective in accelerating pupils' progress.
- The school's strategies to improve outcomes for disadvantaged pupils or those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are not well developed. Leaders do not check regularly and carefully enough, to find out the effectiveness of additional support in accelerating pupils' progress. Although the very few disadvantaged pupils have achieved expected standards over time, there is little evidence to suggest that leaders consider the barriers for these pupils and take deliberate action to support them.
- Leaders have not responded quickly enough to stem the increase in the numbers of pupils persistently absent from school. However, the overall attendance of all pupil groups has recently improved to be in line with the national average.
- The head of school's commitment to inclusion at High Bickington results in a welcoming culture where everyone feels valued. As a result, pupils are happy and enjoy their lessons.
- The curriculum promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development effectively. Religious education lessons ensure that pupils develop a good understanding of different cultures and faiths. Pupils welcome new pupils and visitors to the school. The curriculum ensures that pupils are prepared well with the personal skills they need to be successful in modern Britain.
- The range of high-quality work in pupils' books reflects the importance leaders place on supporting pupils' knowledge, skills and understanding across different subjects, particularly in key stage 2. Topics such as the European Union develop pupils' sense of identity and help them to understand how countries work together, as well as

democracy and the rule of law. This helps pupils to gain an understanding of how they can contribute to society.

- Leaders interact well with parents and respond to their views. For example, parents speak positively about homework. In particular, the three questions posed on the newsletter and in homework help parents to engage in discussion with their child about their learning.
- Leaders make effective use of the primary physical education (PE) and sport funding to give pupils access to a wider range of sports and to increase their participation in physical exercise. All pupils take part in local sports tournaments and the majority of pupils participate in at least one club after school. This, together with the initiative whereby pupils run for 15 minutes a day, is developing pupils' fitness and encouraging them to pursue healthy lifestyles.
- The local authority has provided effective support and challenge for governors, in particular by facilitating decisions around strengthening leadership to secure the long-term future of the school.

Governance of the school

- Governance has not been effective in holding leaders to account for the quality of teaching, learning and assessment across the school. Governors have not been rigorous enough in following up their challenge to the previous headteacher. As a result, change has not happened swiftly enough. The governors recognise that their capacity to oversee the two schools in the federation has been severely limited until very recently.
- Governors are rightly considering the best way to secure the long-term stability of the school. Their engagement with the local authority has been fruitful. However, the work has provided a distraction from the everyday work of the school. Governors have not been vociferous enough in challenging leaders about pupils' progress and attendance.
- Governors do not have a clear strategy to accelerate the progress of disadvantaged pupils. Although they receive regular reports on the progress of these pupils, governors do not hold leaders to account with sufficient rigour. They do not make careful enough analysis of the effectiveness of the additional pupil premium funding. Similarly, the expenditure of funding for those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is not rigorously monitored.
- Governors have taken effective action more recently to tackle the school's weaknesses. For example, by ensuring that there is a full-time head of school they have provided greater stability for the school. The appointment of a temporary, acting executive headteacher has further increased leadership capacity. There are encouraging signs that this work is accelerating school improvement.
- Governors have a good understanding of their own strengths and weaknesses. They have been proactive in commissioning an external review of their effectiveness and have an action plan in place. It is too soon to see the impact of this review as it only took place two weeks ago.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Safer recruitment information and policies are fully compliant. Documentation shows that staff are fastidious in engaging the support of other agencies when they suspect that a pupil may be vulnerable. However, not all safeguarding records are well organised or up to date.
- Leaders aim to mitigate the challenges of the school site. For example, they have put in place measures to safeguard pupils when moving from the lunch hall to the school so that pupils do not have to walk on the road. However, leaders have not acted swiftly enough to tackle the challenges of a cramped playground with an increased number of pupils on roll.
- Leaders and governors ensure that staff are up to date about keeping pupils safe. Staff speak knowledgeably about identifying signs that might indicate that pupils are vulnerable to abuse or exploitation. Visitors from groups such as the NSPCC support the school's work in empowering pupils to have a voice and to 'Speak out'.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- Teachers do not set work that is suitably pitched to challenge the most able mathematicians, particularly in key stage 1. Pupils practise their skills and develop fluency but are not challenged to apply their learning to less familiar tasks. However, the focus on practising skills supports the understanding of pupils who are less competent in mathematics.
- In the past, teachers have too readily accepted work that has poor spelling and grammar or where pupils have taken little care with presentation. Leaders have acted decisively to tackle this. Pupils' books reflect an improving picture, with pupils taking greater care in the presentation of their work. However, the previously relaxed approach to spelling and presentation in particular has stalled progress for some pupils. Recent good teaching is helping pupils to catch up so that they are on track to achieve expected standards in writing.
- School leaders have a range of actions in place to ensure that pupils in danger of falling behind receive help to catch up. However, identification of these pupils is not always as rapid as it could be. This slows progress for these pupils.
- Teachers do not always make good use of information about what pupils know, can do and understand to tune their planning to help all groups of pupils to make good progress. Teachers know who the disadvantaged pupils are but do not always take steps to ensure that progress, for these few individuals, is accelerated.
- Teaching assistants receive effective training and work closely with teachers to support pupils' development. They encourage pupils to do their best. Occasionally, the younger pupils rely too heavily on the support of adults. When the support is removed, activities are not always suitably matched to pupils' needs.

- Teachers devise a wealth of motivating activities to encourage pupils to write. They make skilful links between reading and writing using class books to ignite pupils' interest, and model effective writing techniques. As a result, the vast majority of pupils say that they enjoy writing and are eager to progress.
- The teaching of reading is good. Older pupils are encouraged to discuss the books they read and develop good comprehension skills. A recent initiative to encourage even more reading is having a positive effect. Visits from authors and reading challenges motivate pupils to read widely and often.
- Teachers and other adults ask probing questions to challenge pupils in subjects such as science. Teachers have high expectations of pupils and teach effectively to equip pupils with key concepts. Consequently, pupils are well prepared to investigate and test their ideas. When explaining their learning pupils are methodical and confident in their use of scientific vocabulary. Work in books reflects a high standard of presentation and the effective application of mathematical skills when measuring and presenting information in graphs and charts.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Requires improvement

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare requires improvement.
- Leaders do not always ensure that the school's ongoing risk assessments are consistently applied.
- Pupils know how to keep safe and speak confidently about keeping safe online. However, pupils sometimes do not show an awareness of safe behaviours in the confined playground space. Pupils play well together but their behaviour is sometimes over-boisterous. Pupils playing football dash around and kick the ball without regard for the safety of others playing nearby.
- Activities set in the early years and in Year 1 do not always support pupils' thinking skills and ability to work independently.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development equips them to be caring and responsible citizens in society. They benefit from the many opportunities to learn together in family groups. For example, the oldest and youngest read together. This helps older pupils to nurture younger pupils and build caring relationships.
- Adults are kind and nurturing. They support pupils' self-esteem. In particular, teaching in key stage 2 empowers pupils to think deeply and take responsibility for their learning.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement.
- Pupils in key stage 1 do not always demonstrate positive attitudes to learning. In some lessons, when pupils are working in small groups without direct adult supervision, pupils lose concentration and do not make the progress they should.

- Overall attendance is good. However, leaders fail to analyse the trends and patterns of absence thoroughly. They do not act swiftly enough to stem the decline in attendance of those pupils who are persistently absent.
- Pupils are courteous and respectful. They are adamant that bullying does not take place in the school and that poor behaviour is extremely rare. The records that leaders hold support this view.
- The school's inclusive ethos ensures that all pupils feel valued. Pupils feel well cared for and say they can share their worries with anyone in school.

Outcomes for pupils

Require improvement

- By the time they leave Year 6, pupils are achieving the expected standard in mathematics. However, over time, this does not represent good progress from their starting points. Too few of the pupils who are capable of achieving the higher standard are attaining at the highest level.
- Standards at the end of Year 2 show that fewer pupils achieve the highest levels compared to pupils nationally. Pupils who had low starting points catch up well to achieve the expected standard. However, over time, pupils with middle or high starting points have not made good progress to achieve the highest standard by the end of Year 2, particularly in mathematics.
- Historically, pupils' achievement in writing has been weaker than in reading. Work in books shows encouraging signs of improvement. Pupils now write regularly across all aspects of the curriculum. Outcomes over the last three years reflect continued improvement. Pupils are making at least expected progress in writing. However, work in books reflects that the most rapid progress is made in key stage 2.
- Attainment in phonics is inconsistent. In 2015, very few children met the expected standard in phonics. This represented poor progress from their starting points. In 2016, all pupils caught up. Leaders have accurately identified that currently standards in phonics at Year 1 are not yet good. Writing in pupils' books also reflects the need for catch-up. Leaders have put additional support in place but it is too early to see the fruits of this work.
- Over time, pupils' progress in reading has continued to improve. By the time pupils leave the school, many are achieving above national averages. This represents good progress for all groups of pupils from their different starting points. Pupils of all ages and abilities develop a love for reading. Pupils are eager to visit the well-resourced school library to change their books.
- At the end of key stages 1 and 2, the numbers of pupils who are supported by the pupil premium are too small for national comparisons to be made. Over time, the very few disadvantaged pupils in the school have made good progress in writing and mathematics and exceptional progress in reading. Similarly, pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress from their starting points. However, good progress is often the result of effective teaching in Years 5 and 6, which helps pupils to catch up.

Early years provision

Requires improvement

- Most children join the school in Nursery on a part-time basis. The teacher's on-entry assessments of the children's skills are, on occasion, overly cautious. As a result, there is sometimes a mismatch between the activities planned for children and their needs. This slows down the progress that some children make.
- The early years foundation stage unit is small and leaders have not invested in high-quality resources. Although equipment is well organised and accessible, the inspector did not witness children making independent choices. This limits children's personal development as they sometimes rely heavily on adults.
- The restricted nature of the site hinders children's opportunities to explore and develop their imagination. The outdoor space is shared with the rest of the school at playtimes and lunchtimes. Equipment has to be set up and cleared away twice a day. This hinders opportunities for sustained learning. However, leaders have worked to mitigate the challenges of the early years environment by employing additional adults to ensure the safety of children when learning outdoors.
- The early years leader has supported staff effectively in gaining a good understanding of the expectations for children's learning in the early years. Adults carry out regular observations of children and make notes to assess their abilities in a wide range of learning. The teacher is assiduous in collecting and presenting examples of children's work and photographs that record learning in a well-organised learning journal. However, on occasion, there is little evidence to show that assessments are used to identify children's next steps in learning. This slows down the progress that some children make.
- Teaching requires improvement. There is not enough focus on systematically building on children's early writing and mathematical skills. As a result, not all children make good progress in these areas, particularly the most able ones. Adults are not always precise enough in their expectations and do not always give timely advice. Misconceptions are not always corrected by the adults and consequently further learning opportunities, especially for the most able children, are missed.
- Leadership and management require improvement. There is not a sharp enough focus on children's acquisition of essential skills. Children do not achieve as well as they could. Leaders do not have plans in place to tackle identified weaknesses, other than the plans to move to the new site.
- The proportion of children achieving a good level of development has remained above the national average. The very few disadvantaged pupils achieve in line with others nationally. This does not represent good progress for all children. In particular, not all most-able children go on to exceed in reading, writing and number.
- The teaching of phonics does not support the development of the most able writers. However, those children who have lower starting points and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities benefit from the repetition and reinforcement of phonics teaching. This supports these children in making good progress.
- The teacher works effectively with parents and welcomes them to weekly sessions to look at their child's work. Home learning books also reflect high levels of parental

engagement. Families share 'Wow' moments and complete reading diaries to contribute to the teacher's assessments of the children's skills, knowledge and understanding.

- Leaders have invested time in training staff to support the school's nurturing ethos. The inspector observed high-quality interactions with the children. Children settle happily and quickly into school, responding well to the care and nurture provided by the staff. Teachers and teaching assistants are skilled in helping children understand how to behave. Good day-to-day management ensures that children are happy, safe, secure and well protected.

School details

Unique reference number	113378
Local authority	Devon
Inspection number	10019458

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	70
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Sally Anoyrkatis
Head of school	Rob Norton
Telephone number	01769 560 324
Website	http://www.high-bickington-primary.devon.sch.uk/
Email address	head@high-bickington-primary.devon.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	19 September 2011

Information about this school

- This is a smaller than average primary school with very small cohorts. Some groups may represent one individual.
- It has four mixed-aged classes: a combined Nursery and Reception, a Year 1 and Year 2 class, a Year 3 class and a class comprising Years 4, 5 and 6.
- In April 2015, the school federated with Witheridge Church of England Primary School to form part of the Taw Valley Federation. At this time, the High Bickington headteacher became executive headteacher across the two schools. After a long period of stability in staffing, the last two years have seen considerable changes.
- From September 2016, the executive headteacher has returned to High Bickington as head of school. There is a temporary, acting executive headteacher in place across the Taw Valley Federation. The executive headteacher is the executive headteacher of

TEAM academy.

- An external review of governance took place in October 2016.
- The school runs an early years foundation stage unit, which includes part-time provision for Nursery-aged children from the age of three, and a Reception class. The early years unit is due to move to a new purpose-built site in September 2017.
- The vast majority of pupils are of White British heritage.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils eligible for the pupil premium funding is well below the national average.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is in line with the national average.
- The school manages a breakfast club.
- In 2016 the school met the government's floor standard, which is the minimum expectation for pupils' attainment and progress at the end of Year 6.
- The school does not meet requirements on the publication of information about the 'pupil premium', 'curriculum content' and the 'sport premium' on its website.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector made visits to lessons in all classes, some of which were joint observations with the head of school. She also made a visit to the breakfast club.
- Meetings were held with the executive headteacher, the chair of the governing body, the head of school, the early years leader and two other teachers. A telephone conversation took place with a local authority representative.
- The inspector scrutinised a number of documents, including governing body meeting minutes, school improvements plans and records in relation to behaviour, attendance and safeguarding.
- The inspector carried out work scrutiny in writing and mathematics.
- The inspector met with and heard a selection of pupils read. She looked at examples of pupils' work in their books and spoke to a group of pupils to seek their views about the school. The views of other pupils were gathered during lessons and playtimes. Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour around the school, in lessons and at play.
- The 17 responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, were taken into account. The inspector also considered comments provided by text message.

Inspection team

Tracy Hannon, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

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In the report, 'disadvantaged pupils' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route. www.gov.uk/pupil-premium-information-for-schools-and-alternative-provision-settings.

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