

Woodham Walter Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School

The Street, Woodham Walter, Maldon, Essex CM9 6RF

Inspection dates

30 November–1 December 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	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Requires improvement
Early years provision	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Outstanding

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- Following the previous inspection, senior leaders and governors have not consistently driven forward school improvement. Consequently, pupils have not made good progress in reading, writing or mathematics for the last three years, and the issues identified for improvement at the previous inspection have not been addressed fully.
- Subject leaders are not held to account for pupils' progress in their subjects. They are not sure how best to evaluate pupils' learning.
- Teaching is not consistently good. Teachers do not understand what good learning looks like in mathematics.
- Correct letter and number formation is not taught consistently well from when children start in Reception.
- Current progress in reading is improving because of the small group reading sessions taught by teachers. However, pupils do not apply the skills they learn in these sessions when reading their own choice of books.
- Teachers in key stage 2 do not check the organisation of reading books, or pupils' reading choices, often enough.
- Teachers have not given pupils sufficient opportunities to apply grammar and spelling skills in longer pieces of writing.

The school has the following strengths

- School leaders and governors make effective use of the pupil premium. Consequently, eligible pupils make good progress from their starting points.
- The leadership of special educational needs is outstanding. Staff go more than the extra mile to make sure that pupils' needs are catered for. As a result, pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress from their starting points.
- Pupils love coming to school because of the supportive environment the school provides. This accounts for the pupils' good personal development, behaviour and welfare.
- Safeguarding processes and procedures are robust and meet requirements.
- The curriculum is good. There are many creative and interesting topics.
- Good provision in the early years foundation stage prepares children well for Year 1.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve leadership and management by ensuring that subject leaders:
 - understand precisely what is required of them in their leadership role
 - choose the most effective method of evaluation so that they can work out precisely what is working and what is not working to improve pupils' outcomes in their subjects
 - are held to account for their work through rigorous performance management.
- Improve the quality of teaching so that it is consistently good by ensuring that:
 - all staff understand what good learning looks like in mathematics, and apply this knowledge when planning learning activities
 - teachers understand how to develop pupils' reasoning and problem-solving skills in mathematics
 - teachers check that pupils make the most of the time they are given to complete learning activities in lessons
 - letter and number formation is taught consistently well from children's starting points in Reception.
- Secure consistently good progress for pupils from their starting points in reading, writing and mathematics by ensuring that:
 - pupils have sufficient opportunities to apply their grammar, spelling and punctuation skills in all subjects
 - pupils' choice of reading books is at the right level for their understanding
 - pupils apply what they learn in teacher-led reading groups when reading from their own choice of book
 - pupils understand why they are learning different methods of recording calculations in mathematics.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- Following the previous inspection, the headteacher and governors did not focus enough on analysing the strengths and weaknesses of the school. Consequently, they did not address the decline in pupils' progress in reading, writing and mathematics in key stage 2 or address the key issues from the previous inspection effectively. The headteacher is now clear about what must be done to improve the school. She is checking pupils' progress more regularly and holding teachers to account through more rigorous performance management.
- The local authority reviewed the school in November 2016, considering it a school of concern due to the decline in pupils' progress.. As a result of the review and the appointment of a new chair of the governing body, the headteacher is very much back on track. There is now a clear focus on school improvement and a vision for how this can rapidly be achieved. The new short-term, sharply focused improvement plans set out precisely what steps must be taken to address the important weaknesses, such as progress in reading.
- Subject leaders monitor pupils' progress in their subjects. However, the various evaluation activities they have chosen, such as book scrutiny and checking classroom resources, have not uncovered the reasons for weaknesses in progress in reading, writing and mathematics in key stage 2 accurately. Plans are in place for the English leader to read with pupils to check their understanding of texts and monitor their reading records, and for the mathematics leader to observe learning in lessons but this has not happened yet.
- The headteacher has recently improved the approach to monitoring teachers' work. Meetings to check pupils' progress are taking place every half term and teachers' targets are clearly linked to pupils' outcomes. There has not been time for the effect of this to be seen in the progress pupils make over time.
- Last year, the headteacher introduced expectations for how pupils present their work but this has not been rigorously monitored until recently. Consequently, she has not recognised that children do not learn correct letter and number formation from when they start at the school, and that this remains an issue as pupils move through the school.
- The curriculum is good. It is carefully planned, well organised and introduces pupils to a wide range of different subjects. Pupils enjoy learning and like the visits to different places that are included in each topic. They love the opportunity to learn outside in the forest school lessons.
- The school has good links with a school in Kenya and teachers from the school have visited Woodham Walter. The school is also linked to a culturally diverse school in London. As a result, pupils have a good understanding of different cultures and talk about how everyone gets on well together at school whatever background they come from, thus preparing them well for life in modern Britain.

- The curriculum is extended by the good range of after-school clubs and by good links with the local church and community. Pupils take part every year in the Village Review and attend special services at the church, such as the Christmas Christingle. These activities support pupils' good spiritual development and their understanding of their contribution to the local community.
- The school makes good use of the primary school physical education (PE) and sport premium. This is evident in teachers' confidence to teach a range of different sports and in pupils' attendance at after-school sports clubs.
- The outstanding leadership of special educational needs is a strength of the school. Parents speak very highly of the way the school manages each pupil's needs very carefully so that pupils settle down rapidly and get the support they require in lessons and throughout the school day. Assessments are accurate and careful due to excellent liaison with specialists, such as the educational psychologists and speech therapists. The special needs leader makes sure that the specialist learning support assistants have good up-to-date training, for example in supporting pupils with autism. Due to the outstanding provision, all pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress from their starting points.
- Of the 58 parents who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, the overwhelming majority have positive opinions about the school. Most would recommend the school to another parent.

Governance

- Following the recent local authority review, governors have gained a better understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. Since the new chair of the governing body took over in September, governors have a sharper understanding of their role in monitoring and challenging leaders about the quality of education. The chair of the governing body now works with the headteacher at least once a week on school improvement.
- There is a new approach to governors' visits, which, in the words of one long-standing Governor, are 'more robust'. Each visit has a sharp focus and results in an evaluative report to the full governing body.
- Governors have used their powers effectively to co-opt new governors with useful expertise in education and experience of governance.
- Governors monitor the school budget well. They carefully check that the pupil premium grant is used effectively to ensure that eligible pupils make good progress from their starting points.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Arrangements to safeguard children are well managed and all procedures and processes meet requirements. All staff have undertaken required training and a detailed record is kept to ensure that their training is updated regularly. The training helps to make sure that pupils are safe at school.
- Pupils identified as most vulnerable are carefully supported and cared for. The school liaises very effectively with external agencies that give additional support.

- There are hardly any incidents of poor behaviour. If there is an incident, it is recorded with sufficient detail with a clear explanation of how the incident was managed and resolved. There have been virtually no exclusions from school for the last three years.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- Teaching has not been consistently good since the previous inspection. As a result, pupils' progress has not improved rapidly enough.
- Teachers plan interesting learning activities for pupils but do not give consistently good explanations about why they are encouraging pupils to use particular approaches, such as how to solve mathematical problems. An example of weak explanations include when most-able pupils in key stage 1 are good at adding numbers in their heads quickly but are not encouraged to use this skill when adding numbers to make 100.
- Pupils do not complete as much work as they are capable of because teachers do not have high enough expectations of what pupils can achieve. Sometimes pupils pause for too long between tasks and lose focus on what they are learning.
- Learning support assistants are given careful instructions by the teachers so they know how to help pupils carry out tasks. In most cases, they give pupils time to think things through for themselves, and ask questions to help them to think.
- Specialist teaching assistants work very effectively with pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. They understand how to support pupils' particular needs effectively, often talking pupils through each task that they are asked to undertake.
- Teachers' assessments are accurate and are checked regularly with nearby schools and with local authority advisers.
- Teachers follow the school's marking and feedback policy but teachers themselves do not always model the style of handwriting they are teaching pupils to use. As a result, pupils' work is not sufficiently well presented.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils are confident and enthusiastic about their school. One parent commented, 'I was shocked during my first time in the school assembly – pupils are so confident at sharing their ideas.' Another parent said, 'It's a massive WOW! Children gain so much confidence here!'
- Pupils work together well in most lessons. They talk about their work and help each other to solve problems, for example in mathematics. This contributes to their good social development.
- Most pupils are keen to work hard and enjoy their lessons. However, often they do not produce enough work and they do not take sufficient care in the way they present their written work.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils behave well in lessons, as they walk around the school and on the playground. They respond at once when adults ask them to stop and listen, for example at the end of breaktime. This contributes to their good moral development.
- Pupils say there is no bullying of any kind in the school and that pupils take good care of each other. At breaktimes, older pupils take it in turns to be play leaders making sure that younger pupils have someone to play with.
- Pupils have a good understanding of how to keep themselves safe when using the internet.
- Attendance has improved this school year and is high compared with other schools nationally.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- Pupils' progress from the end of Year 2 to the end of Year 6 has been below average for the last three years for most pupils in reading, writing and mathematics. The headteacher and teachers have worked hard this term to turn this around. Consequently, current pupils in key stage 2, including most-able pupils, are making better progress than previously. The school's current performance information indicates that about half the pupils have already reached age-related expectations for the end of the school year in mathematics.
- Although the school's own assessment information shows better progress in reading in key stage 2, this is based on assessment of teacher-led reading sessions. It does not include a full evaluation of pupils' ability to apply the skills they learn in these sessions when reading on their own. This is because teachers in key stage 2 do not check pupils' choice of reading book or whether they are applying skills learned from the sessions when reading on their own. Pupils often select books that are beyond their level of understanding.
- Pupils make good progress in learning to read in key stage 1 due to the effective, systematic approach the school uses to teach phonics. Pupils' reading choices are carefully monitored by teachers and, consequently, least-able pupils are given plenty of practice and the most able are given the right level of challenge to move their learning forward.
- At the time of the inspection, the school did not have the end of autumn term performance information for pupils' progress in writing in key stage 2. Scrutiny of pupils' books indicates good progress in the unaided writing tasks pupils complete in English, but good progress in writing is not evident in pupils' writing in other subjects, such as history.

- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress from their starting points due to the excellent learning plans provided for each pupil. Every pupil with a statement of special educational needs or an education, health and care plan has a target book that contains all the targets from their statement or plan. Teachers and specialist teaching assistants value these target books because it helps them to work from the targets and carefully note the small steps of progress each pupil makes.
- Disadvantaged pupils of all abilities, including the most able, make good progress from their starting points because the funds to support their learning are used effectively. Teachers meticulously check the pupils' understanding on a regular basis and provide the necessary support to help them to learn new skills.

Early years provision

Good

- Most children start in Reception with skills, knowledge and understanding similar to other children of their age. They make good progress due to the good teaching and range of activities provided for them. Most achieve a good level of development by the end of the Reception Year with some doing even better than this.
- The curriculum is very carefully planned and the early years leader makes sure that children have interesting and child-friendly topics on offer. Traditional stories have been very popular and children love acting out their favourite parts of stories in the role-play area or with puppets in the puppet theatre.
- The early years leader ensures that assessment opportunities are planned into every learning activity. Teaching assistants have copies of the plans and are confident to make notes in children's records, known as 'learning journeys', when they notice a child can do something they could not do before.
- The classroom is well organised and attractive. Children easily find resources to help them with their reading and writing. The outside learning area is well resourced and carefully fenced so that children are safe when they choose to go outside with or without adult support.
- There is good leadership of the early years foundation stage. The leader has a good understanding of the requirements of the early years framework, and ensures a good balance between activities children can choose from and direct teaching of key skills, for example phonics and number skills.
- Assessment is currently accurate. The school recognises that this was not the case in 2014 because outcomes were not checked robustly by leaders. Assessments are now moderated by the local authority to ensure that leaders have an accurate view.
- Children have good opportunities for writing in all learning activities, for example writing party invitations or letters to Santa. However, there is not a consistent approach to teaching letter and number formation when the children start to write, and so too many children do not form letters and numbers accurately by the time they reach Year 1.

School details

Unique reference number	115123
Local authority	Essex
Inspection number	10006380

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	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	103
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Sam Keeley
Headteacher	Sue Dodd
Telephone number	01245 223 264
Website	www.woodhamwalter.essex.sch.uk
Email address	admin@woodhamwalter.essex.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	17–18 November 2011

Information about this school

- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.
- The school is much smaller than most primary schools.
- There is a high proportion of pupils with education, health and care plans and statements of special educational needs, and those who receive school support.
- Most pupils are of White British heritage and none speak English as an additional language.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which are the minimum expectations of pupils' attainment in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 6.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector held meetings with senior leaders, subject leaders, teachers, parents, pupils, representatives of the local authority and the Diocese of Chelmsford, the chair of the governing body and governors. The inspector listened to some pupils, from most year groups, read.
- The inspector visited lessons. Most of these visits were with the headteacher, the chair of the governing body and the leader of provision for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities.
- The inspector looked at pupils' books from all year groups. This activity was conducted alongside senior leaders.
- The school's action plans and self-evaluation were considered.
- A number of documents were studied, including policies and records relating to the safety and welfare of pupils, such as behaviour records, the record of checks on staff's suitability to work with children, and pupils' files.
- Responses from 58 parents to Parent View were considered and the inspector also spoke to a number of parents during the inspection.

Inspection team

Julie Winyard, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

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