

# Howbridge Church of England Junior School

Howbridge Road, Witham, Essex CM8 1BZ

## Inspection dates

7–8 June 2017

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
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Not previously inspected

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a school that requires improvement

- Leaders, including governors, have not ensured that pupils achieve well enough.
- Improvements made since opening as an academy have not been sustained. Results in national tests in 2016 were low. Recent actions to raise achievement are leading to improvement, but this is not consistent across all subjects and year groups.
- Leaders have implemented a range of strategies to raise achievement in reading, writing and mathematics. These have not been fully evaluated so their overall impact remains unclear.
- The quality of teaching and learning varies too widely. Expectations of pupils are not always high enough. Not all teachers make good use of time and support assistants in lessons.
- Teachers' planning does not always provide pupils of different abilities, particularly the most able, with suitably challenging work.
- The teaching of some foundation subjects does not enable pupils to make sufficient progress.
- Not all disadvantaged pupils attend regularly.
- Targets for improvement are ambitious but unrealistic. They do not relate directly to the information gained from regular assessments.
- Middle leadership 'teams' are new and are not fully established.
- Self-evaluation lacks clarity. Improvement plans do not have enough measurable targets.

### The school has the following strengths

- Pupils are well-mannered, polite and respectful. They feel that the school is a friendly, safe and enjoyable place to be.
- All pupils, including those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, are cared for and supported well.
- Most pupils attend school regularly.
- The headteacher, ably supported by his senior team, is leading improvement.
- There is some very effective teaching that enables pupils to make good progress.
- Enrichment activities in sport and the arts, and school visits, are valued highly by pupils.
- Safeguarding arrangements are secure.

## Full report

### What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Gain greater consistency to the quality of teaching and learning by:
  - raising expectations of what pupils are capable of attaining, especially the most able
  - ensuring that procedures introduced this year to provide tasks suited to pupils' different abilities become embedded in all lessons
  - making the best use of time and additional adults in lessons to promote pupils' progress
  - ensuring that the quality of teaching of foundation subjects matches the best teaching of reading, writing and mathematics.
- Raise achievement, particularly in mathematics, by:
  - evaluating the impact of the strategies introduced to improve pupils' progress in reading, writing and mathematics, and ensuring that the ones that make the biggest difference become firmly established
  - providing the most able pupils with work that really challenges them
  - taking further action to ensure that a small minority of disadvantaged pupils attend more regularly so that they benefit fully from the support provided for them
  - setting challenging but realistic targets for improvement based on the regular assessments of pupils' progress made by staff.
- Improve the quality of leadership and management by:
  - improving procedures to evaluate the school's work, so that leaders have an accurate overview of the quality of teaching and the school's overall effectiveness
  - using the information gained from self-evaluation to inform succinct plans for improvement that enable leaders to measure at regular intervals the rate of improvement made
  - maintaining the support provided for the recently formed teams of middle leaders, to enable them to contribute fully to the school's improvement
  - providing further opportunities for pupils to develop their learning in science, modern languages and information technology.

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management

### Requires improvement

- School leaders have led improvements since opening as an academy, but acknowledge that 'outcomes in 2016 were not good enough'. They feel that, currently, pupils' progress is good. Inspectors' evidence does not support this view. There are weaknesses in some year groups and not all of the most able pupils make enough progress.
- Self-evaluation is detailed but does not explain the reasons for underachievement in the past. Leaders know where most of the school's strengths and weaknesses lie, but their views of the quality of teaching are too generous. The low standards achieved in the past and the current, variable progress made by pupils indicate that teaching is not good.
- The headteacher is ambitious for the school. He knows broadly what actions are needed to improve provision and outcomes. Improvement plans are detailed, but do not clearly identify how the actions taken to make improvements are followed through to see if they work, or which ones are the most effective.
- A wide range of initiatives and resources have been implemented to improve pupils' reading, writing and mathematics. Setting has been replaced by mixed-ability classes. New resources have been purchased to aid teachers' planning and promote pupils' reading and writing. A range of new resources are used to promote mastery in mathematics. Many of these initiatives are new and have not been evaluated fully to gauge the impact they are having on pupils' learning and progress.
- Middle leadership 'teams' introduced this year are adding to the school's overall capacity to improve. The leadership of mathematics has changed this year. These leaders need more time to become firmly established and contribute fully to school improvement.
- The curriculum helps pupils to acquire basic skills in literacy and numeracy but there is an imbalance in the amount of time spent learning foundation subjects. Pupils spend significantly less time studying science, geography, history and modern languages. The quality of teaching, and the progress made by pupils in these subjects, are not rigorously monitored.
- Fundamental British values are promoted well through assemblies and weekly personal, social and health education lessons. Pupils have regular opportunities to learn about the lives of others, and reflect on their own feelings and beliefs.

### Governance of the school

- The academy trust views the school's effectiveness as good, but this is too generous. It has been unable to make widespread improvements or prevent some pupils from underachieving last year. It acknowledges that some of its procedures to hold staff accountable need sharpening and has plans to standardise self-evaluation and improvement planning this year.
- The school's local governing body, led by an effective chairperson, is rebuilding following the departure of some governors. It acknowledges that more needs to be

done to improve outcomes for pupils. Minutes of meetings show that it is becoming more effective in providing support and challenge for senior leaders to secure improvements. It and the trust board ensure that statutory duties are met.

- Governors ensure that pupil premium funding is managed effectively to promote pupils' personal development and narrow gaps in performance. The provision of a nurture group and one-to-one support are enabling these pupils to develop their confidence and build self-esteem.
- Physical education and sport funding is used equally well to improve teaching and bolster the wide range of sporting provision and competition provided. However, governors do not ensure that leaders provide a detailed breakdown of how this funding is spent, or evaluate the full impact it is having.
- Governors ensure that funding for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is used effectively. An experienced and effective senior leader coordinates good support for these pupils in lessons, enabling them to make similar progress to others. Additional support is provided by a counsellor and speech therapist. These pupils' personal care and welfare needs are routinely monitored. Regular training ensures that they are known well by staff and their specific needs are met.

## Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Necessary checks are carried out when recruiting adults to work with children. In the past, some staff have been appointed without providing suitable references. Support staff are updating these records. Appointment procedures have been strengthened.
- The school site is safe and fully secure.
- Procedures to protect children at risk of harm are well established. Child protection arrangements are secure. Incidents are recorded systematically and followed up with a range of local support services.
- Leaders ensure that safeguarding training for all staff, including 'Prevent' duty, is kept up to date.

## Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

## Requires improvement

- The quality of teaching varies too widely. There is a lack of consistency across and within year groups.
- Not all teachers make good use of time in lessons, or deploy their support assistants effectively. At times, pupils' work is minimal, and too much is left unfinished. Marking is not always completed in line with the school's own policy. The long explanations by some teachers limit opportunities for pupils to work together or learn by themselves.
- New procedures to provide suitably challenging tasks are not firmly embedded. Pupils understand the difference between bronze, silver, gold and platinum tasks, enabling them to select more challenging work. However, some do not make the right choices, and others feel that some tasks are still not challenging enough for them, especially in mathematics.

- In literacy, pupils do all of their writing in the same book. There is clear evidence of improved progress in the quality and quantity of their writing, particularly in Year 6. However, books also show limited opportunities to develop their learning in a range of subjects. Coverage of science, geography, history and modern languages is minimal. Pupils told inspectors that they would like more opportunities to study these aspects, and to use computers more often.
- Reading is promoted well. Daily opportunities to read and access the library give reading a high profile. Less-able readers who met with inspectors enthused about regular reading to join the 'millionaires club' and the quizzes to test their understanding of the books they have read. The library is used well by pupils each lunchtime.
- New resources have been introduced into mathematics to improve pupils' application of their knowledge and develop their reasoning and problem-solving skills. Additional tasks such as 'Mr Wade says' and 'champion challenge' help pupils to develop their mastery of mathematics. However, observations and scrutiny of work by inspectors confirmed the views of pupils and some parents that the most able, including the most able disadvantaged pupils, are not pushed as hard as they could be to achieve their very best.
- Some teaching enables pupils to make good progress, particularly in Year 6. Where teaching is most effective, teachers forge excellent relations with pupils. They use their personal skills and a range of resources to capture and retain pupils' interest. Their planning builds on pupils' prior learning and any misconceptions are corrected promptly. Pupils are expected to behave well and work hard. Questioning and discussion engage all learners, and pupils have time to discuss and evaluate their work.

## Personal development, behaviour and welfare

**Good**

### Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- The values of strive, trust, achieve and respect underpin much of the school's work. Its strong Christian ethos and the wide range of enrichment activities provided for pupils add significantly to their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, and their enjoyment of school.
- Pupils thrive on the range of enrichment activities provided to promote their personal development. For example, during the inspection, pupils participated in the school's sports day with great commitment and enthusiasm. Throughout the morning, their behaviour and sportsmanship were exemplary.
- Vulnerable pupils are cared for particularly well. Staff provide a nurture group during lunchtimes to enable these pupils to feel safe and socialise together. Regular learning, attendance and behaviour meetings enable teachers and the coordinator for special educational needs to monitor their welfare and resolve any concerns.
- Overall attendance is similar to that found nationally. Systematic procedures are in place to monitor attendance and take prompt action if pupils fail to attend. Despite these procedures, a small minority of disadvantaged pupils are persistently absent from school, which is having a detrimental effect on their overall achievement. Leaders are

working hard to get these pupils back into school.

- Staff know disadvantaged pupils well. They target effective support towards them in lessons. Time is used effectively during the day and after school to enable them to catch up and fill gaps in their understanding. A mentor is deployed effectively to foster links with the parents of disadvantaged pupils, and enable the pupils to engage fully in school life. This makes a significant contribution to their personal development and well-being.

## Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils are taught how to be polite and welcoming. They held doors open for inspectors and were eager to engage in conversation with them. They feel that school is a safe, friendly place to be. They wear their star badges for good behaviour with pride.
- Pupils feel free from bullying. They told inspectors that it happens at times, mostly pushing and shoving, or being unpleasant towards one another. If this does occur they feel that a member of staff will always help them to sort things out. They know what to do if they receive the wrong type of messages or contacts on their mobile phones or computers.
- Inspectors found that pupils behave well even when teaching fails to inspire or engage them. When this happens, a few become compliant and do not engage fully in class discussions.

## Outcomes for pupils

## Requires improvement

- Results in 2016 showed that pupils achieved well in writing and to a lesser extent in reading, but not in mathematics. Overall results were below average and the proportion of pupils exceeding expectations was low. Leaders' analysis of these results shows that a small proportion of pupils met the expected standard in two core subjects, but did not do well enough in the third subject.
- The targets set for pupils' attainment and progress last year were aspirational, but were missed by a long way. Similar ambitious targets have been set this year. Current assessment information indicates that not all of them are likely to be met. Leaders recognise that there is scope to realign targets with current assessments to make them more meaningful and relevant.
- Leaders feel that, currently, pupils are making good progress. Observations of teaching and scrutiny of work by inspectors did not support this view. Progress varies, depending on the quality of teaching. Generally, pupils do better in reading and writing than they do in mathematics. Progress in science, and in some foundation subjects taught as part of the school's creative curriculum in the afternoons, is too slow, mainly because pupils do not study these subjects in depth and the quality of teaching varies too widely.
- Leaders' latest assessment information shows that, currently, pupils are making improved progress, but this is not consistent across year groups and subjects. Pupils in Year 6 are making better progress, but the proportion of them meeting the expected

standard in writing is lower than in the previous year. The school's monitoring also shows that pupils in Years 3 and 5 are making better progress and are currently exceeding the targets set for them. However, pupils in Year 4 are making less progress and the proportion meeting the expected standard in writing is low.

- The current attainment of disadvantaged pupils in Year 6 is lower than that of their peers. Leaders' assessment information shows that more also needs to be done to ensure that disadvantaged pupils in other year groups achieve well enough, especially in writing.
- Leaders have taken action to add further challenge for the most able, to ensure that those capable of achieving highly do so. Teachers prepare 'gold and platinum tasks' for them, but some pupils still feel that they are not challenging enough, especially in mathematics. Links forged with a local secondary school enable the most able pupils in all year groups to gain from specialist teaching in a range of subjects. Parents commented positively to inspectors about the quality of this provision and the impact it is having.

## School details

Unique reference number	140666
Local authority	Essex
Inspection number	10031345

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

Type of school	Junior
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	7 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	360
Appropriate authority	Academy trust
Chair	Ruth Everett
Headteacher	Sean Wade
Telephone number	01376 501648
Website	<a href="http://www.howbridgejunior.co.uk">www.howbridgejunior.co.uk</a>
Email address	<a href="mailto:office@howbridge-jun.essex.sch.uk">office@howbridge-jun.essex.sch.uk</a>
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

## Information about this school

- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.
- It complies with Department for Education guidance on what schools and, in particular, academies should publish. This does not include its annual reports and accounts, as these are published on the academy trust's website. Leaders are amending the school's website to provide a clear link to these documents.
- The majority of pupils are White British. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds is below average.
- The proportion of pupils eligible for the pupil premium is above average.
- A higher than average proportion of pupils have special educational needs and/or disabilities. A higher than average proportion of these pupils have an education, health and care plan.

- The academy met the government's floor standards last year.
- The school converted to an academy in September 2014. This was its first inspection.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 11 of the 12 teachers at work in lessons. They carried out learning walks to observe pupils’ learning and behaviour, and scrutinise their work. They also walked the school to gain an overview of the school’s ethos and evidence of how effectively it promotes pupils’ spiritual, moral, social and cultural education.
- They held meetings with senior and middle leaders, a newly-qualified teacher, the chair of the local governing board and two members of the academy trust, one of whom is the chief executive. They also met with a group of pupils, and spoke informally with pupils and parents.
- Inspectors observed the school’s work. They looked at safeguarding and child protection policy and procedures, self-evaluation and improvement planning, minutes of governors’ meetings, records of pupils’ behaviour and attendance, and other information provided by school leaders.
- Inspectors scrutinised pupils’ work in books during lessons, and sampled pupils’ work in Years 4 and 6. They considered 26 free-text responses sent by parents, and a letter sent by one parent. Questionnaires for pupils and staff were not carried out.

## Inspection team

John Mitcheson, lead inspector	Her Majesty’s Inspector
Sharon Wilson	Ofsted Inspector
Richard Griffiths	Ofsted Inspector

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