

St Mary's Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School Woodham Ferrers

Main Road, Woodham Ferrers, Chelmsford, Essex CM3 8RJ

Inspection dates

10–11 January 2018

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- Since the previous inspection, standards have fallen. Although new leaders are taking effective action to improve the overall effectiveness of the school, they have not yet secured a good quality of education for pupils.
- Teaching, learning and assessment are not yet good. Teachers do not consistently meet the different learning needs of different pupils.
- Recent improvements in the progress pupils make have not yet ensured that they are achieving as well as their peers nationally.
- Leaders' new initiatives to support disadvantaged pupils have improved the progress these pupils make. However, the needs of disadvantaged pupils are not yet widely understood across the school.
- Teachers have not instilled in pupils a good understanding of how to learn effectively. Pupils do not make as much progress as they could.
- The progress made by children in early years is inadequate. Teaching does not meet their individual needs well enough.

The school has the following strengths

- New leaders' work to raise standards is leading to rapid improvements. While not yet good, the school is quickly recovering from the decline in its effectiveness.
- The interim executive board (IEB) has a thorough understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. Members of the IEB work closely and effectively with leaders to secure improvements.
- Pupils' behaviour is good. They are polite and courteous to each other and to adults.
- Leaders promote equality and diversity well. Pupils treat others with respect.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve pupils' progress in all subjects, particularly in writing, so that it is at least good by:
 - ensuring that all teaching is tailored to the needs and abilities of the different pupils in every class
 - developing pupils' approaches to learning so that they maximise their use of time in lessons.
- Improve provision in early years by:
 - ensuring that it is directly overseen by a suitably qualified teacher
 - making sure that what is taught is based on the teacher's secure understanding of what the children already know and can do
 - consistently engaging children in meaningful activities which promote their development.

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

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- New leaders and governors are ambitious for the school. When new leaders were appointed in the summer of 2017, they quickly identified many areas of poor practice which had developed since the previous inspection. They immediately put measures in place to improve provision at the school. Leaders and teachers are now held to account for the work that they do. Expectations across the school are high. As a result, teaching has improved and pupils are now making greater progress in key stages 1 and 2 than they previously were.
- Leaders' secure and thorough self-evaluation has enabled them to create well-focused and credible improvement plans. They regularly review the progress they are making. They are realistic and accurate in their assessment of the impact they have had so far. For example, leaders' urgent action to improve safeguarding practice means that it is now effective. However, they recognise that there are further improvements to be made to improve the well-being of pupils, for example, in the better use of primary physical education (PE) and sport premium funding. Leaders have seen improvements in the progress of disadvantaged pupils as a result of additional support that has recently been provided. They recognise, though, that teachers do not yet have a full grasp of the barriers to learning these pupils face. Leaders' timely actions have improved the effectiveness of the school. They have a clear capacity to continue this improvement.
- Since joining the school, new leaders have made significant changes to what pupils are taught. They have introduced a curriculum model which ensures that pupils learn about a wide range of topics. This means, for example, that pupils learn about the way other people live and about the past. They develop scientific understanding. Pupils now have a better understanding of the world around them.
- Leaders actively seek and make good use of external support. For example, teachers now work with colleagues from other schools in a local federation to improve their planning. This is evident in lessons, which mostly have better structure. Some teaching is good, such as mathematics in Years 5 and 6. Leaders recognise that they have more to do to make sure that all teaching is good. Writing, for example, is not generally well taught.
- Leaders have effectively secured the commitment of staff to their vision. Most of those who responded to Ofsted's staff survey said that leaders do all they can to ensure that the school has a motivated, respected and effective teaching staff. They agreed that leaders use professional development to encourage, challenge and support teachers' improvement. All those who responded to the survey agreed that the school challenges all pupils to make at least good progress.
- Leaders have been very effective in the promotion of British values of tolerance and respect. All pupils spoken with during the inspection, and all pupils who responded to Ofsted's pupil survey, said that they are taught to respect others and treat people equally. They said that it is 'okay to be different'.
- Leaders have secured a good standard of behaviour at the school. They have

implemented a new behaviour policy and pupils behave well, in and out of lessons.

- It is too soon to see the impact of leaders' actions to improve provision in early years. Early years provision is a weakness of the school.

Governance of the school

- Governance is undertaken by the IEB and is a strength of the school. The IEB was established because new leaders, the local authority and the diocese had significant concerns about the overall effectiveness of the school and sought urgent assistance to realise improvements. Members of the IEB bring much-needed skills and experience and these complement those of new leaders. They share the same high expectations and commitment to high standards. As a result, the IEB and leaders work well together and are improving the school.
- The IEB has a deep and very accurate understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. It challenges and supports leaders effectively to drive up standards rapidly. Members of the IEB have specific remits for which they take direct responsibility. They use a combination of monitoring and direct involvement to hold leaders to account and to help them in their work. As a result, the IEB has helped to improve a range of areas, including attendance, health and safety, and safeguarding. They know what has improved, why it has improved and what needs to happen next.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Leaders identified significant concerns over the practices in place to keep children safe prior to this academic year. They commissioned audits on safeguarding and health and safety and quickly acted to ensure that pupils are safe. With the IEB, they overhauled the school's records regarding children at risk and staff recruitment checks. These now function effectively to protect children.
- Staff are appropriately trained and have a good understanding of how to keep pupils safe. Pupils' welfare is a routine feature of meetings and minor concerns are passed on and recorded. Leaders are able to identify any emerging concerns. When leaders do have concerns, they follow them up quickly and appropriately.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- Most teaching helps most pupils to make progress from their starting points. However, because teachers do not consistently match the work they set to what pupils already know and can do, pupils do not generally make good progress. During the inspection, for example, challenging English work was set for some pupils. However, these pupils' prior learning was not advanced enough for them to access this work. Spelling work for another group of pupils was based on pupils' choices, not an assessment of their current ability. In both of these examples, pupils progressed more slowly than if teachers had fully incorporated pupils' prior learning into their plans.
- Teachers sometimes focus too much on what pupils are doing, rather than on what

they are learning. Activities which are intended to develop or consolidate pupils' learning are sometimes not structured well. As a consequence, the work pupils do does not always enable them to progress towards the objectives set by the teacher. For example, some pupils were observed undertaking a drama task. Because the task lacked clear structure, it did not develop the teacher's stated objective of developing pupils' story-writing skills.

- The best practice in the school is seen when teachers use assessment well to identify what pupils have already learned. In these instances, learning support assistants and teachers work well with individual pupils to build on their starting points. For example, in mathematics, one group of pupils were observed to understand improper fractions quickly because they were all well supported by adults with precise knowledge of what they already understood. Many pupils make clear progress in mathematics over time.
- Other pupils are well supported by adults working with them to develop their reading. Good use is made of questioning to challenge pupils' understanding of texts and to enhance their interest in reading.
- Leaders provide plans and resources for teachers in the delivery of the new curriculum. This supports teachers in using their own knowledge and understanding to help pupils to learn. As a result, pupils' work shows clear development in their understanding of subjects such as science, history and geography.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Requires improvement

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare requires improvement.
- Some aspects of leaders' work to promote pupils' well-being is in its early stages. Their effective strategies mean that pupils are kept safe. However, other aspects of promoting pupils' physical well-being are less secure. The promotion of sport through the primary PE and sport premium funding, for example, has not been effective. There are few extra-curricular activities. As a consequence, this aspect of the school is not good.
- Pupils do not consistently demonstrate the skills of being effective learners. They are sometimes distracted and do not always focus on their work. This is because the work they are asked to do does not consistently reflect their own skills, interests and abilities. While pupils' lack of enthusiasm rarely interrupts the learning of others, it does hinder their own progress.
- Pupils are well taught to keep safe. Leaders run activities such as e-safety weeks and road-safety walks. Pupils explained to the inspector how they have been taught about 'stranger danger', cyber bullying and about ChildLine.
- Pupils said that they feel safe. This included most of those who responded to Ofsted's pupil survey. Pupils also said that bullying is rare. They said that when it does happen, leaders deal with it effectively.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils conduct themselves well. They eat lunch in a calm and responsible way. They play well together at break- and lunchtimes. Pupils told the inspector that people are kind in the school. Pupils are polite and courteous to others.
- Pupils treat others with respect. Pupils explained that it is 'okay to be different' and all pupils who responded to Ofsted's pupil survey felt that the school encourages them to respect others and treat people equally.
- In lessons, pupils are quick to respond to requests from adults. They listen quietly to other pupils and to adults. Pupils rarely disrupt the learning of others.
- Leaders' work to improve attendance is working. Levels of attendance are improving rapidly.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- Between 2016 and 2017, pupils' progress and attainment declined in both key stage 1 and key stage 2.
- The proportion of pupils achieving the expected standard in the Year 1 phonics screening check fell from above the national average in 2015 to below in both 2016 and 2017. Fewer pupils than the national average achieved the expected standard in reading or writing at the end of key stage 1 in 2017.
- Fewer pupils than the national average achieved the expected standard in mathematics at the end of key stage 1 in 2017.
- In 2016, progress in reading, writing and mathematics between key stage 1 and key stage 2 was above the national average. However, in 2017, key stage 2 pupils made less progress in these subjects than their peers nationally.
- Pupils, including disadvantaged pupils, are now making better progress in all subjects than they did in the past. While not yet consistently good, progress has accelerated across key stages 1 and 2 since September 2017.
- Pupils make the most progress in mathematics in both key stages. In Years 4 and 5, pupils are making good progress in mathematics.

Early years provision

Inadequate

- Early years provision is not directly overseen by a qualified teacher. Leaders are aware of this deficiency in provision and have taken swift action to rectify this. They have taken steps to ensure that statutory requirements are met and have plans to secure further improvement. However, leaders' clear understanding of the changes required have not yet had sufficient impact.
- Teaching in early years is ineffective. The work children do is not closely matched to their abilities and it does not support them to learn in different ways. It is not based on

a robust understanding of what they already know and can do. Too often, children are engaged in activities which do not help them to develop.

- Teachers do not manage children's behaviour well enough. Because children are not engaged in activities which reflect their skills and interests, they are often distracted or not engaged in meaningful activity. Teachers do not do enough to sustain children's interest. When children are not doing what they should be, teachers are not consistent in following up on the instructions they give.
- The progress made by children in early years is inadequate. Because the cohort of children who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities is so small, it is not possible to accurately compare their progress with that of children nationally. However, in each of 2014, 2015 and 2016, the proportion of other children in the school achieving a good level of development was lower than the national average. This accounted for almost all children in early years. Leaders agree that children who complete early years are not well prepared to begin key stage 1 programmes of study.

School details

Unique reference number	115176
Local authority	Essex
Inspection number	10045352

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	57
Appropriate authority	Interim executive board
Chair	Heather Faulkner
Headteacher	Lorna Pigram
Telephone number	01245 320505
Website	www.stmaryswoodhamferrers.co.uk
Email address	admin@st-marys-woodham.essex.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	5–6 March 2013

Information about this school

- This school serves the area of Woodham Ferrers.
- Governance is undertaken by an interim executive board.
- The school is receiving support from a local federation of schools.
- A larger than average proportion of pupils are girls.
- The proportion of pupils known to have been eligible for free school meals in the last six years is above average.
- The proportion of pupils whose first language is not believed to be English is below average.
- The proportion of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities is above average.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed parts of lessons for all classes, sometimes accompanied by the school's senior leaders, to observe pupils' learning and progress. He also reviewed the work of a range of pupils in their books.
- Meetings were held with senior leaders, a representative from the diocese, a representative from the local authority and three members of the interim executive board.
- The inspector spoke to pupils in groups and individually across different age groups.
- The inspector scrutinised a range of documents, including the school's self-evaluation document and improvement plans, minutes of interim executive board meetings and pupil progress and tracking information.
- The inspector reviewed the school's single central record of recruitment checks for staff and other safeguarding documentation.
- The inspector considered 21 responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, 28 responses to the pupil survey and eight responses to the staff survey.

Inspection team

Andy Hemmings, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

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