

Tonwell St Mary's Church of England Primary School

Ware Road, Tonwell, Ware, Hertfordshire SG12 0HN

Inspection dates

22 to 23 January 2019

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	Requires improvement
Early years provision	Requires improvement
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- Leaders have not focused sufficiently on raising pupils' achievement in reading, writing and mathematics. Pupils, including disadvantaged pupils and the most able, are not making enough progress across the school, and some pupils have fallen behind.
- Leaders have not ensured that teaching is good throughout the school. For example, teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve are not high enough.
- The school's curriculum is not fully developed. As a result, pupils are not prepared well enough for the next stages of their education.
- Some pupils are not confident in their learning. They rely too much on support from adults, which limits the progress they make.
- Governors have not ensured that the findings of the previous inspection have been addressed fully and effectively. The work of the governing body has not been sufficiently focused on improving outcomes for all pupils, including pupils for whom the pupil premium grant applies.
- The early years provision is not good enough. Leaders have not focused on what the children could achieve given the level of support they have.

The school has the following strengths

- Improvements in the quality of teaching are beginning to show in the improved outcomes for pupils in key stage 2.
- Staff have a clear understanding of the needs of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), who are well supported in class.
- Parents are very positive about the school. They say that their children feel safe and are happy at the school.
- Behaviour is good. Pupils are polite, friendly and well mannered. They respond quickly to requests from adults.
- Leaders have taken effective action to improve attendance. Overall rates of attendance are now similar to the national average.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management so that standards rise across the school by:
 - developing the effectiveness of all leaders so that they make an effective contribution to school improvement and ensure that standards rise across the school
 - being more rigorous and systematic in the way that leaders monitor the impact of actions to improve the quality of teaching
 - developing the curriculum so that pupils gain good knowledge and understanding across a wide range of subjects
 - ensuring that there is clear strategic leadership of the early years
 - ensuring that governors are clear about the strengths and weaknesses of the school and can hold leaders to account for the impact of their actions
 - making better use of the pupil premium grant so that it has greater impact on improving outcomes for disadvantaged pupils.
- Improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment so that pupils make better progress, and those who are behind catch up quickly, by ensuring that:
 - teachers use assessment effectively to plan activities that reflect pupils' starting points so that work is neither too easy nor too hard
 - teachers have high expectations of what pupils are capable of
 - pupils have regular opportunities to use their writing skills across the curriculum
 - pupils are encouraged to become confident and independent learners.

An external review of governance should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management can be further improved.

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

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- Leaders and governors have not addressed the areas for improvement from the previous inspection well enough. Several aspects of the school's work continue to require improvement.
- When monitoring the quality of teaching, learning and assessment, leaders do not focus well enough on whether their actions to improve teaching and outcomes have had an impact. As a result, leaders are not clear about the difference their actions are making in the school, and this has slowed the pace of improvement.
- Leadership is improving. Following training, leaders are now better able to identify weaknesses and take effective measures to address them. For example, leaders have produced clear guidance for teaching writing and mathematics. It is too soon to see the impact of this guidance on teachers' practice.
- Leaders have ensured that pupils with SEND are well supported in school. Leaders work effectively with outside agencies, including specialist teaching services, to ensure that the provision is appropriate and meets the needs of individual pupils.
- The headteacher ensures that relationships with parents are good. This enables the school to support pupils' emotional needs well so that pupils are happy in school and are able to learn.
- The school promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development effectively. Pupils learn about other faiths through trips to places of worship and through visitors to the school. These sorts of experiences are helping pupils to develop understanding and empathy. This was clearly evident in pupils' writing in response to the national commemoration of the hundredth anniversary of the end of World War I.
- Pupils are increasingly well prepared for life in modern Britain. For example, through the work of the school council, they have direct experience of democracy, freedom of expression and the rule of law.
- Pupil premium funding is not sufficiently focused on improving outcomes for disadvantaged pupils, particularly for those who are at risk of underachieving in key stage 2. A proportion of pupil premium funding has been used effectively to improve attendance and extend pupils' experience, for example supporting participation in a residential trip, and participation in extra-curricular activities, including Breakfast Club.
- Leaders use the sports premium effectively in order to extend pupils' participation in sport. For example, pupils take part in a wide range of events organised through the local schools' sports partnership. Leaders also use the funding to employ specialist teachers to work with pupils and to provide training for teachers. The school has received recognition for its commitment to competitive sport.
- The local authority has not checked the school with a sharp focus to ensure that the school is improving rapidly enough. The feedback that the local authority has provided has not helped leaders focus clearly on what they need to do to raise achievement quickly enough across the school, particularly for pupils who have been falling behind. Training and support from the local authority to develop the skills of teachers and

subject leaders has helped improve the quality of teaching in English and mathematics.

Governance of the school

- Governors are too dependent on the headteacher to lead and guide the work of the governing body. This means that there is too little separation of roles between school leaders and governors.
- Governors are not clear enough about the strengths and weaknesses of the school. Although governors are asking more questions than before, they do not challenge or follow up leaders' responses to confirm what they are told or to deepen their understanding of the effectiveness of the school.
- Governors are not clear about their role in holding leaders to account for the impact of their actions. For example, governors do not monitor pupils' progress well enough or check how well leaders use additional funds to improve outcomes for disadvantaged pupils.
- Governors lack strategic knowledge and understanding. Governors' work is more focused on the day-to-day aspects of running the school rather than on leading the strategic vision and direction.
- Governors are aware of their own weaknesses and what they need to do to improve. They have taken part in training to start to address these weaknesses. They are starting to develop a better understanding of what they need to do next to support and challenge the school.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Leaders and governors ensure that staff are clear that keeping pupils safe is everyone's responsibility. Staff are vigilant and report child protection concerns promptly. Staff are confident that any concerns they raise are acted on promptly by leaders.
- The school's single central record of pre-appointment checks is up to date and complies with statutory requirements. All appropriate checks are carried out for staff, including agency staff, governors and volunteers before they are allowed to work in the school.
- Leaders ensure that all adults working at the school are kept up to date with training on how to keep pupils safe. Teachers and support staff are clear about what they need to do to report any concerns and are confident that these will be acted on promptly by leaders.
- The school's procedures for dealing with child protection concerns ensure that suitable action is taken when necessary. Leaders keep detailed records securely. Records show concerns that have been raised and the actions that have been taken as a result. The school works closely with outside agencies. The family support worker provides effective support to families in challenging circumstances.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- Teachers' expectations of what pupils could achieve are not high enough. This is because there is insufficient challenge, particularly for most-able pupils. Not enough pupils are making at least the progress expected of them against their starting points. Although assessment shows that pupils attain well at the end of key stage 1, this is not consistently reflected in current pupils' books. There is evidence that pupils could achieve more.
- Although the teaching of writing is improving, there are aspects such as spelling, letter formation and editing skills that are not taught rigorously and consistently across the school. This limits pupils' independence and fluency in writing and means that they do not achieve as much as they should.
- The use of assessment is improving. The school's agreed approach is not used consistently, so pupils are not always clear about what they need to do to improve their work. Teachers do not use assessment information to plan enough opportunities to challenge most-able pupils.
- On occasions, pupils do not achieve as well as they could in writing because teachers do not give pupils enough opportunities to apply their learned skills independently.
- Teaching has improved over time. However, this improvement has not been rapid enough for it to have enough impact on the learning and achievement of all pupils. Where teachers' expectations are higher, pupils respond positively and achieve better. Recent changes to the way pupils are taught English and mathematics in key stage 2 are beginning to have a positive impact on pupils' achievement.
- Because there is clearer guidance for planning and assessment of writing across the school, teachers are beginning to gain a clearer understanding of what pupils should be able to achieve in each year group and by the end of the key stage.
- The teaching of mathematics has improved across the school. This is because teachers are now clearer about expectations of what they need to teach to enable pupils to develop the knowledge and skills they need to solve mathematical problems. There is a more consistent approach to the planning of mathematics across the school and pupils have access to a range of high-quality resources to support their thinking.
- Pupils with SEND are well supported in class. This is because staff have a clear understanding of the various needs of pupils with SEND and work effectively with other agencies to meet their needs.
- The teaching of early reading skills in Reception and key stage 1 is effective. As a result of accurate teaching, pupils use their phonics knowledge to blend and segment words and apply these skills to their spelling. Teachers give pupils books and resources to help them practise their sounds and reading at home.
- Teaching assistants are deployed efficiently to support pupils with additional needs. This is especially the case in one-to-one situations where teaching assistants support pupils through focused questioning that helps them develop their learning further. Teaching assistants build trust with individual pupils to help them overcome anxieties

and engage in their learning.

- Relationships between adults and pupils are positive. Pupils follow instructions and guidance in lessons and say they enjoy their learning.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Requires improvement

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare requires improvement.
- Pupils' attitudes to learning are still being developed. Pupils can talk about the importance of challenge in their learning. In the words of one pupil, 'challenge is good because it makes your brain grow'. However, pupils do not yet demonstrate this in the classroom, where they are often reliant on direction and encouragement from adults to complete tasks.
- The continuing legacy of low expectations and underachievement means that pupils lack confidence and independence in their learning. This is particularly so in key stage 2. In lessons, pupils need adult support and guidance to be able to respond to appropriate challenge.
- Pupils know about bullying and the forms it can take. They know that they should tell an adult if they or a friend are being bullied. They are confident that adults in school will help them sort things out if they are worried about anything at school.
- Pupils can talk at an age-appropriate level about how to keep themselves and others safe online. They know about the importance of e-safety and safe use of the internet. They can talk about the risks posed by social media and online gaming.
- The school council is democratically elected by pupils, and 'child voice' is used to find out what pupils think about ways to improve their school. The school council has been involved in developing the school behaviour code as well as promoting activities for Anti-Bullying Week and Safer internet Day.
- Parents are very positive about how their children are cared for and supported by the school. They say that pupils feel safe, that they are happy and that they enjoy coming to school.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils behave well in their classroom and at play. They move around the school calmly and sensibly. They understand what is expected of them and respond accordingly. As a result, incidents of poor behaviour are low and are dealt with promptly.
- Pupils are polite, friendly and well-mannered. They are happy to talk about their school and the work they are doing.
- Leaders' concerted efforts to improve attendance have worked. Through a range of successful strategies, attendance has improved so that it is now in line with national averages. School leaders have ensured that parents understand that regular

attendance at school is important to ensure that pupils achieve well.

- Positive work with families and the inclusion of external agencies to provide support have also contributed to a reduction in persistent absence, which the school had identified previously as a concern.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- Pupils are not prepared well enough for the next stages of their education. They do not have access to a curriculum that develops their interests and enables them to gain knowledge or use their skills across a range of subjects.
- Over the past three years the school has remained in the lowest 20% of schools for progress overall in mathematics at key stage 2.
- The most able pupils do not make the progress that they should in all classes. This is because the expectations of what most-able pupils can and should be achieving are not consistently high enough. They, along with other pupils, are also not being given enough opportunities to write at sufficient length to develop their ideas and skills in subjects other than English. As a result, not enough pupils achieve the higher standards of which they are capable.
- Progress and attainment in reading and writing are improving but, due to weaker teaching in the past, some pupils still need to catch up. This situation has not been addressed quickly enough and these pupils are still not achieving as well as they should in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Outcomes for pupils at the end of key stage 1 have improved in 2017 and 2018. Work in current pupils' books indicates that they are able to achieve even more.
- The proportion of pupils who reached the expected standard in the Year 1 phonics screening check in 2017 and 2018 was similar to the national average.
- There are a very small number of disadvantaged pupils, so it is not possible to make comparisons with national information. However, additional funding for them is used well to support their well-being, but insufficient thought and planning have been given to using additional funding to support their academic progress. Consequently, they are behind where they should be.

Early years provision

Requires improvement

- There is no clear strategic leadership of the early years. There is not the focus and drive to ensure that children achieve the very best in learning so that they start key stage 1 with a high level of skills, particularly in writing. This is because staff do not always have high enough expectations of what children are capable of achieving and, therefore, set their sights too low.
- Children join the early years with skills and abilities that are typical of their age. The proportion of children that attained a good level of development was similar to the national average in 2017 and 2018. Although children make reasonable progress overall, some children do not do as well as they should. This is because basic skills, such as correct letter formation, are not reinforced and there are not enough

opportunities for pupils to develop their independence.

- The early years leader has worked with the support of the local authority to improve the provision. There is a rich environment and children have access to a wide range of resources to stimulate learning and play.
- Relationships are very positive, and the children respond well to adults and to each other. The adults know the children well and work with them to extend their knowledge and interests in the world around them. The children trust the adults who work with them and the children were confident to talk to the inspector about what they were learning.

School details

Unique reference number	117388
Local authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	10058671

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	41
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Diane Howarth
Interim headteacher	Tracy Keddie
Telephone number	01920 462 894
Website	www.tonwell.herts.sch.uk
Email address	head@tonwell.herts.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	21 to 22 September 2016

Information about this school

- This is a very small primary school with four mixed-aged classes.
- Almost all pupils are of White British background.
- The proportion of pupils with SEND, including those with an education, health and care plan, is above average. The proportion of disadvantaged pupils is above average.
- At the time of the inspection, there was an interim headteacher in post to cover for the substantive headteacher during a period of planned leave.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector gathered a range of evidence to judge the quality of teaching and learning over time. The inspector observed six lessons across the school, jointly with school leaders.
- The inspector looked closely at the work pupils were doing in their books and discussed this with pupils and leaders. The inspector spoke with pupils throughout the inspection.
- The inspector looked at a range of the school's documents, including minutes of governing body meetings, the results of evaluations carried out by the local authority and by the diocese, leaders' records of monitoring the quality of teaching and learning, assessment and the school's website.
- The inspector checked the school's single central record of pre-employment checks and other documentation concerned with the safer recruitment of staff and volunteers.
- Meetings were held with leaders, governors, representatives of the local authority and a group of pupils.
- The inspector took account of the 21 responses to Parent View that were received during the inspection as well as feedback from pupils and staff.

Inspection team

Katherine Douglas, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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