

Minerva Primary School

Outer Circle, Taunton, Somerset TA1 2BU

Inspection dates

22–23 May 2019

Overall effectiveness	Inadequate
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Requires improvement
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Inadequate
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Requires improvement
Outcomes for pupils	Inadequate
Early years provision	Requires improvement
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an inadequate school

- Since opening, the quality of teaching and pupils' outcomes have been inadequate at the school. Trustees' actions to appoint a new leader and deputy chief executive officers (CEO) this year are providing the capacity that this school urgently required.
- Current leaders are making headway in ensuring that the school functions as it should. They have made notable improvements to middle leadership and pupils' early education. However, they have not ensured that pupils' underachievement across the school is fully eliminated.
- Pupils' special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) have gone unidentified in the past. Current leaders are taking appropriate action to identify pupils' needs and address these.
- Many pupils have gaps in their knowledge and understanding. Teaching is not yet remedying these significant weaknesses effectively enough. Some pupils' work is not matched to their needs.
- Teaching has not covered the national curriculum as a minimum in the past. This has prevented pupils from mastering the concepts they need as they progress year on year. The English and mathematics curriculums have been overhauled. However, current teaching is still too inconsistent.
- School leaders are addressing weak teaching stringently. A comprehensive training package is improving staff subject knowledge.
- Leaders have taken decisive action to increase teaching time for basic skills to help pupils to catch up. As a result, the curriculum is narrow in the short term.
- The majority of pupils show a keenness to learn. However, teaching over time has not provided some pupils with the resilience they need to tackle work with confidence.
- Rates of exclusions and absence are too high.
- Many parents remain dissatisfied. Others recognise improvements. Some parents do not feel well informed when changes occur.

The school has the following strengths

- The head of school has an astute understanding of the weaknesses in the school. The combined efforts of his leadership team are bringing about considered improvement.
- Safeguarding practices are comprehensive.
- Teaching in early years enables children to get off to a secure start at school.

Full report

In accordance with section 44(2) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires significant improvement, because it is performing significantly less well than it might in all the circumstances reasonably be expected to perform.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of leadership and management at trustee and school level by ensuring that they enable:
 - pupils who have previously underachieved to catch up quickly in reading, writing and mathematics so that they are well prepared for their next stage of education
 - pupils' additional needs to be identified as soon as they appear so that pupils with SEND receive effective teaching and learning
 - inconsistencies in the quality of teaching to be eradicated and an acceptable standard of education to be achieved in all classes
 - pupils to access teaching across a full range of subjects and achieve well
 - parents and carers to receive clear communication so that they understand any emerging changes when they occur.
- Improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment, including in early years, by ensuring that:
 - teaching builds on what pupils know, can do and understand, and ensures that pupils make consistently good progress in reading, writing and mathematics
 - pupils with SEND receive work that is closely matched to their needs and helps them reach their individual targets
 - teaching is consistently good, and pupils' basic skills and vocabulary are developed, particularly for disadvantaged pupils and those who have previously underachieved, so that pupils' catch-up sessions are no longer required.
- Improve pupils' personal development, behaviour and welfare by ensuring that:
 - pupils' resilience to learn is strong
 - pupils' attendance continues to improve so that it is at least in line with the national average
 - levels of pupils' exclusion are reduced to at least those seen nationally.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- Current leaders do not shy away from taking difficult decisions. However, the head of school and the extended leadership team are only part way through their journey to remedy the complexity of staffing issues and the legacy of weaknesses at the school.
- Leaders' actions have improved the quality of education for the youngest pupils. Pupils who are in their early education, now receive a better start to school. Pupils' learning, their positive behaviour and good attendance to school are increasingly sustained in Year 1. However, these improvements do not extend to many older pupils who have been in the school for longer and continue to underachieve. As a result, current teaching is not addressing fully the legacy of pupils' underachievement. Too few pupils are catching up quickly enough.
- Significant staff changes since the school opened slowed the school improvement journey. However, leadership is now stable. The deployment of an additional tier of leadership at trust level is increasing the pace at which the school is improving. Current leaders have clear systems in place to monitor what pupils can do, know and understand. As a result, senior and middle leaders have an accurate picture of the many remaining weaknesses in the school and are firmly focused on improving teaching, learning and assessment by developing staff subject knowledge and skills successfully. School leaders understand that there are no quick fixes. They are working resolutely to sustain improvements.
- Middle leaders have a secure skill-set. Many middle-leadership roles changed a year ago or at the beginning of this academic year. The early years, SEND, behaviour, safeguarding, English and mathematics leaders' actions have already resulted in notable improvements to the school's improvement journey. For example, sequences of work are better planned.
- Leaders' raising-attainment plan, and detailed subject action plans, are precise and focused on the right aspects for improvement. Leaders are tackling weak teaching with determination. However, teaching is still too inconsistent, and leaders have not yet been successful in eradicating inadequate teaching, learning and assessment.
- English and mathematics leaders demonstrate secure subject knowledge. The training and coaching they receive is supporting them well in their work to bring about further improvement. Leaders teach classes where pupils' underachievement has been most acute in the past. These leaders undertake a full range of monitoring against the school's priorities for improvement. However, at times, their work is focused on how well teachers conform to school policy rather than the impact that teaching is having on learning. This means that some teachers do not get precise feedback to ensure that their teaching is remedying pupils' gaps in knowledge.
- School leaders and teachers have detailed conversations about what pupils can do, know and understand. They discuss any barriers to pupils' knowledge, and individualised plans are put into place to ensure that pupils who have fallen behind receive precise teaching to remedy gaps in their learning. This work is relatively recent, and, as such, its impact is too variable from class to class.

- Current school leaders' actions are ensuring that pupils' previously unidentified SEND are now recognised. The leader of SEND and one of the deputy CEOs of the trust are taking a systematic approach to identifying, assessing and writing individual pupil plans. This includes education, health and care plan (EHCP) applications for pupils with SEND. Leaders, alongside external agencies, are enabling plans to be put into place so that pupils' social and emotional needs and speech and language needs are better met. Current leaders' work is beginning to pay off. However, leaders recognise that there is much more to do before these pupils' parents will be fully satisfied. Leaders have not yet been effective in ensuring that pupils' individualised learning needs are met in the classroom.
- Leaders are taking explicit action to enhance the school's strategy for teaching of reading, writing, spelling accurately, the use of grammar, and routine number operations in mathematics (the basic skills). As a result, the curriculum is narrow in the short term to plug the gaps in pupils' knowledge of these core aspects and help them to access a broader curriculum and be successful in the future. However, senior leaders are beginning to widen the school's curriculum. For example, Spanish lessons have been introduced in key stage 2 and extra-curricular activities have been reintroduced after a period of absence. However, the impact of teaching in humanities and science is still far too variable.
- Some parents remain dissatisfied with the education their children receive. They feel that reasons for making changes to school policy have not always been shared with them. The leader designated to develop parental engagement is just beginning her work. Leaders have increased the number of opportunities for parents to attend consultations about their children's progress and attend school events to celebrate their learning.
- Leaders are ensuring that pupils' curriculum experiences are beginning to be enhanced. For example, pupils took part in enterprise week and they have displayed their remembrance poetry and artwork in the church and community Link Centre. Consequently, pupils' understanding of life in modern Britain and their spiritual, moral, social and cultural education is developing.
- Staff recognise the stability that current leaders bring. They value the structured staff training they receive. They feel included and valued in the school's improvement work. Staff morale is high.
- Many disadvantaged pupils, including those with social, emotional and mental health (SEMH) needs, have made gains in their personal and emotional development because of the targeted use of pupil premium funding. Leaders ensure that teachers are held accountable for pupils' progress. Therefore, academic differences between disadvantaged pupils and their peers are closing in some year groups. However, too few disadvantaged pupils attain the knowledge and skills that are expected for their age. This is because their progress is predicated on the quality of teaching they receive, which is far too variable over time.
- The sport premium is used appropriately to develop pupils' social skills, team sports and their involvement in competitive sports. Years 4 and 5 pupils have been trained as sports leaders and support younger pupils adequately. Pupils are positive about 'Spin Bus' sessions on offer for pupils to use static bikes to improve their fitness.

Governance of the school

- The trustees recognised the lack of leadership capacity and made appointments to strengthen leadership in the school. As a result, the substantive head of school and extended leadership team are bringing about rapid improvement and show the potential to continue in this direction of travel.
- A deputy CEO is leading additional school improvement support. This role is proving effective in holding leaders to account and providing trustees with accurate, first-hand information about the extent of weaknesses and how, when and by whom they are being remedied. Trustees have reorganised the governance structure for the school. Local academy boards were disbanded, and a new area hub system has been put into place. However, it is too early to see any impact of this.
- Nevertheless, over time trustees have not held leaders to account sufficiently for securing good outcomes for pupils, including those who are disadvantaged and/or with SEND. Actions have not been successful in ensuring that pupils' absence and rates of pupils' exclusions have reduced to be in line with national averages.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Trustees check the school's single central record for accuracy and to ensure that safer recruitment checks are up to date.
- Safeguarding training for staff is comprehensive and in line with current legislation. Staff apply their training confidently because thorough ongoing checks on staff's understanding are maintained. Consequently, staff make timely referrals when they perceive that pupils are at risk.
- Leaders who are responsible for child protection are persistent in their actions to follow up concerns and work with external agencies to keep pupils safe. School records are thorough and meticulously maintained.
- Pupils say that they feel safe, and know how to stay safe online.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Inadequate

- The impact of teaching over time has not provided pupils with the knowledge and skills they need to be well prepared for the next stage of their education. Many pupils have gaps in their knowledge and understanding across a range of subjects. Teaching is not yet remedying these significant weaknesses in some year groups. Consequently, too many pupils who have previously underachieved are not catching up sufficiently.
- Teaching content has not been demanding enough in the past and teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve have been too low. This has prevented pupils from making the progress they should year on year. Consequently, when pupils reach upper key stage 2, they have too much curriculum content to cover and too many concepts still to master. This is preventing many pupils from meeting their potential.
- Teaching for pupils with SEND is not closely matched to pupils' needs. Tasks are often too difficult, and pupils are moved on before they understand concepts. As a result, pupils gain insufficient practice to consolidate their learning.

- Leaders' comprehensive package of staff training is beginning to develop teachers' subject knowledge, and their ability to plan units of work and assess pupils' gaps in learning. However, teachers do not yet have the necessary skills and knowledge to consistently deliver their plans successfully in the classroom. Consequently, pupils do not make the progress they should over time.
- Teaching is having a positive impact on improving pupils' productivity, presentation and handwriting. However, teaching is not addressing pupils' gaps in learning well enough. This shortfall limits pupils' ability to structure and expand their ideas sufficiently well. As a result, too few pupils write with the accuracy and complexity that is expected for their age.
- Teaching is not enabling pupils who left key stage 1 without a secure knowledge of phonics to catch up. Too many pupils in Years 2, 3 and 4 do not use and apply their knowledge of the key stage 1 phonics curriculum to spell accurately.
- Training to develop subject knowledge and teaching in mathematics is developing their understanding of how to plan units of work and use of mathematical vocabulary. However, some teachers do not pick up when pupils do not understand or fall behind. As a result, pupils' gaps in learning in these classes are not addressed and their learning falters over time.
- Stark differences in the quality of teaching across the school exist. In basic skills work, some teachers and adults are unable to adapt tasks or deal with pupils' misconceptions as they arise. As a result, key learning time is not fully utilised because pupils complete tasks that do not consolidate their understanding. Conversely, in a few groups, teachers' assessments are used astutely to tackle pupils' weaknesses and help pupils to catch up well.
- Pupils who joined the school at the usual entry point in Reception over the last 18 months are making better progress and attaining increasingly higher standards. Pupils are sustaining this rate of progress in writing in Year 1 because of the better start they have made.

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 understand how to keep safe. Pupils say that they know who to go to if they have a worry, are upset or feel that they have been unfairly treated.
- Records show that incidents of bullying are reducing. However, pupils highlight that, when name-calling happens, some adults' interventions are less effective and take longer to sort out.
- The curriculum has not supported pupils to gain the resilience and determination they need to learn well over time. Most pupils want to learn and take interest in what is taught. However, some pupils do not maintain concentration. They do not have the resilience to stick at tasks because their prior curriculum knowledge of what has been taught is not secure. As a result, some pupils are slow to start work, or they wait for an adult to intervene. Conversely, some pupils with previously average attainment show determination and enthusiasm to achieve well. They persevere even when their

learning is interrupted by others, or they receive work that is not precisely matched to their needs.

- Significant pastoral support is in place for the most vulnerable pupils. There are many routes that pupils can follow to get additional help. Pupils who find regulating their own emotions, feelings and behaviour challenging, are supported well. Pupils with SEMH needs and those who have been previously been at risk of exclusion are better supported in class. However, leaders' actions are not uniformly successful in enabling these pupils to make academic progress, particularly in reading. Leaders acknowledge how fundamental this is to improving pupils' resilience to learn.
- Pupils who benefit from learning in the nurture room, receive specific teaching intervention. This is helping these pupils to gain self-confidence so that their individualised needs are increasingly met.
- Pupils who attend breakfast club enjoy a safe and calm start to the day. Pupils eat a healthy breakfast. They enjoy time with their peers. Adults supervise them well.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement.
- Leaders' coordinated approach to tackling pupils' poor behaviour is ongoing. Behaviour around the school is improving. This is evident in a marked reduction of rates of exclusions this term. Nevertheless, the rates of pupils' exclusions remain well above those seen nationally.
- Pupils who were previously on reduced part-time timetables have increased their time in attendance at school. Leaders have established a new behaviour policy and monitoring system. Staff increasingly follow the school's approaches outlined in the behaviour policy. As a result, incidents of poor behaviour at social times and in class are decreasing markedly. Nevertheless, leaders know that improving pupils' learning aptitudes remains a pressing issue and this is fundamentally linked to improving the quality of teaching.
- Although improving, pupils' attendance overall has been lower than the national average and continues to be so. Pupils in the lowest years attend well. However, attendance remains low in classes where pupils' exclusions have been high in the past. This has reduced attendance overall. Current leaders are taking effective action to improve attendance. They track attendance and lateness thoroughly, challenge poor attendance and do not authorise absence when it is not warranted. However, too many disadvantaged pupils, and pupils with SEND do not attend school regularly enough. Consequently, persistent absence is too high.
- A small minority of pupils receive additional support at points of transition in the school day. Key programmes are helping these pupils to extend their ability to explain their feelings and emotions. This is enabling pupils who were previously disaffected from school to be engaged in learning with increasing success.

Outcomes for pupils

Inadequate

- Since the school has opened, the proportions of pupils who leave the school with skills

and knowledge in reading, writing and mathematics in line with their age has continued to be low. In 2018, less than half the pupils left the school with the reading and mathematical knowledge that is expected for their age.

- At the beginning of the year, the quality of writing for two thirds of pupils who entered Years 3, 5 and 6 was not at the expected standard. Leaders' current work to improve pupils' writing is paying off. However, because pupils enter upper key stage 2 with significant gaps in their knowledge, teachers spend much time teaching content that should have been taught earlier in pupils' schooling. This restricts pupils' ability to write with the complexity and sophistication expected for their age.
- In the past pupils' attainment at the end of key stage 1 has been significantly lower than that seen nationally in reading, writing and mathematics. Current pupils in Year 2 continue to underperform, particularly in writing.
- The proportions of pupils who meet the required standards in the Year 1 phonics screening checks increased markedly in 2018 to just below the national average. Those pupils who met this standard have sustained their ability to read words accurately. However, too many older pupils have gaps in their phonics and vocabulary knowledge. Pupils' ability to use their phonic knowledge to spell accurately as they progress through the school is too limited.
- In September 2018 a large majority of pupils entered key stage 2 with skills and knowledge well below those expected for their age. These pupils are not catching up quickly enough. Pupils continue to have gaps in their basic English skills, including poor spelling. Pupils' understanding of mathematical concepts is hindered because these pupils do not receive work that is matched to their ability.
- Just over a third of pupils have an identified SEND need. This is higher in some year groups. Pupils with SEND do not make enough progress in reading, writing and mathematics. Current leaders have strengthened the way that they track these pupils' academic achievements. However, these pupils are not making enough progress against their individual learning goals.
- Approximately six in every ten pupils are eligible for the pupil premium. In 2018, disadvantaged pupils attained significantly less well than other pupils nationally. However, some outperformed their peers. Overall, too few disadvantaged pupils across the school attain the knowledge and skills to prepare them well for the next stage of their education. This is because teaching overall is too variable.
- More pupils than is typically found attend school on a part-time basis. Much good work has been done to help these pupils be ready to learn, develop their confidence and increase the time they spend in school. However, these pupils still have significant gaps in their knowledge due to the amount of school time they have missed previously.
- Leaders' actions to improve pupils' outcomes in mathematics are proving effective in targeting pupils' weaknesses in basic mathematical knowledge. This is enabling some pupils to become more fluent in aspects of teaching that they did not master further down the school. However, leaders' strategies to improve pupils' achievements in mathematics are not yet ensuring that pupils in each year catch up quickly enough. Pupils who make the best progress are taught by middle and senior leaders.

Early years provision

Requires improvement

- The Nursery and Reception leaders have a strong understanding of the strengths and areas that require further work in early years. Leaders are working determinedly on the right aspects for improvement.
- Leaders ensure that adults adapt their teaching so that children who have the greatest need get the right support to catch up. They prioritise children's language and communication, vocabulary, and physical development, to ensure that children are learning the foundations for their onward education with increasing success. Staff identify children's barriers to learning quickly and work productively address these.
- The proportion of children reaching a good level of development, the standards that are expected at the end of Reception, has risen year on year since the school opened. However, it is still below the national average.
- Most children form positive relationships with adults and other children in the setting. Children are nurtured to develop their confidence. As a result, many engage in motivating activities across a full range of areas of learning. They often sustain their learning well and respond to adults' instructions.
- Many children enter nursery with knowledge and skills well below that expected for their age. Leaders have improved the way they assess what children can do, know and understand. Children experience tailored teaching experiences to help them make progress over time. However, a minority of children do not make strong enough progress in their fine motor skills. Teaching prioritises this aspect. However, a few of these children struggle to form their letters correctly.
- Children eligible for pupil premium fund benefit from specific interventions. As a result, these children are catching up well in their early language and communication skills.
- Teaching ensures that children gain a love of sharing stories and books from the start of Nursery. The teaching of phonics is systematic and regular. However, a small minority of the lowest-attaining children struggle to read short words and gain the knowledge set out in the school's phonics programme. Teachers and leaders are addressing this issue by working effectively with external agencies to develop specific speech and language programmes to overcome these barriers to learning. This is beginning to enable these children to catch up.
- Children with SEND receive caring support to build their confidence. Staff work with a full range of external agencies to ensure that these children's needs are identified and addressed early on. However, some children's progress is too variable.
- Leaders ensure that transition from Nursery to Reception and onto Year 1 is effective.
- Early years welfare requirements are met. Safeguarding is effective. Lunchtime for children in the hall is a calm and orderly time. Children enjoy their lunch and are supported well.

School details

Unique reference number	143143
Local authority	Somerset
Inspection number	10088282

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	2 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	184
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair	Eric van den Barselaar
Headteacher	Steve Beynon
Telephone number	01823 337051
Website	www.minervaprimaryschool.co.uk
Email address	Minerva@redstartpartnership.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- Since the school opened in September 2016 there have been many changes at leadership level. A substantive headteacher was appointed midway through the autumn term 2018. Most middle leaders were appointed in September 2018. Most teaching staff have changed since the school opened.
- The school is part of The Redstart Learning Partnership (TRLP). This is a multi-academy trust of eight primary schools in Somerset.
- The trust has changed its leadership structure this year. There are now two deputy CEOs who hold four schools to account for their performance. Hubs monitor the standards at the school and inform the trust of the school's performance.
- Minerva is a slightly smaller than average primary school. It has a Nursery on site.
- The proportions of pupils who are eligible for the pupil premium are significantly above the national average.

- The proportion of pupils who receive special educational needs support is well above the national average. The proportion of pupils who have an education, health and care plan is also above the national average.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed pupils' learning in visits to classes across the school, including in the Nursery. Inspectors reviewed pupils' work in books across a range of subjects. The inspection team worked in close partnership with senior and middle leaders to review pupils' progress and the quality of the school's provision over time.
- Inspectors talked with a group of pupils to seek their views about the school. They also listened to the views of many pupils during lessons and social times. Inspectors listened to pupils from Years 1, 2, 4, 5 and 6 reading.
- Inspectors held meetings with the head of school, the deputy CEO, and the extended leadership team in the school. An inspector met with the CEO and held a meeting with an additional member of the trust. She also held telephone discussions with the chair of trustees and a senior representative of the local authority education and improvement team.
- Inspectors scrutinised a number of school documents including: the school's raising attainment plan and action plans; the school's view of its own performance; and pupils' performance information; governors' minutes; records relating to behaviour; leaders' monitoring checks; pupils' attendance information and a range of safeguarding records.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour in lessons, at social times and around the school.
- Inspectors considered 29 responses to the online survey, Parent View, and free-text comments. An inspector also talked with parents during the inspection to seek their views of the school and of the education their children receive. Inspectors took into account the staff online survey, held a meeting with 12 members of staff and met with a newly qualified teacher.

Inspection team

Julie Carrington, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Alison Cogher

Ofsted Inspector

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