

Colne Engaine Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School

Inspection report

Unique reference number	115135
Local authority	Essex
Inspection number	379015
Inspection dates	24–25 April 2012
Lead inspector	Martin Beale

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	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	107
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Godfrey Evans
Headteacher	Julie Winstanley
Date of previous school inspection	1 October 2007
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Introduction

Inspection team

Martin Beale

Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. Over six hours were spent observing teaching and learning in parts of 10 lessons taught by five members of staff, holding discussions with pupils about their learning, and hearing pupils read. The inspector held meetings with staff and members of the governing body, including the Chair. The inspector observed the school's work, and scrutinised pupils' books, assessment data, and case studies of specific pupils. He also looked at evidence of the school's self-evaluation and improvement planning. He analysed 51 responses to the questionnaire returned by parents and carers.

Information about the school

Most pupils are from White British backgrounds in this smaller than average primary school. Few pupils are known to be eligible for free school meals. The proportion of pupils with disabilities and those with special educational needs supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is above average. Their needs are mostly associated with emotional and social difficulties, or moderate learning difficulties. Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage are taught in a Reception class, including a small number of pupils from Year 1. Pupils in the rest of the school are taught in three mixed-age classes. The school meets the current floor standards, which set the government's minimum expectations for attainment and progress.

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness	2
Achievement of pupils	2
Quality of teaching	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils	1
Leadership and management	2

Key findings

- This is a good school. The rich curriculum provides many memorable experiences and promotes exceptionally well pupils’ spiritual, moral, social, and cultural development and their outstanding behaviour. The school is not outstanding because not all teaching is of a consistently high quality and the school has not evaluated sharply whether changes to how it promotes writing are having the desired effect.
- Pupils make good progress. Attainment is above average and rising by the end of Year 6, following a slight dip in 2010. Basic reading skills develop well and pupils are able to talk enthusiastically about the books and authors they enjoy. Their facility and confidence with number is deepened as they solve problems frequently. Achievement in writing, particularly for boys, has not been as strong as in reading and mathematics, although observations suggest that boys are becoming more engaged by recent changes to teaching methods.
- Most lessons move learning forward at a fast pace in calm and well-managed classrooms. Teachers provide a range of imaginative and engaging activities that interest the pupils so that they are absorbed in their learning. However, there are some inconsistencies, particularly when teachers talk for too long and miss opportunities to use questioning to check understanding.
- Pupils treat each other with respect and show great consideration for the needs of others. Their excellent behaviour, very positive attitudes to learning, respect for others, and their ability to work collaboratively help to generate a happy and purposeful environment for learning.
- Strong leadership from the headteacher and a challenging governing body have improved the school and developed a united staff team. Teaching has improved through the sharp focus on managing the performance of staff and by teachers working closely together to share expertise and learn from each other.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the proportion of good and better teaching by:
 - ensuring that teachers achieve a better balance between their talk and pupils' engagement in learning
 - developing teachers' questioning skills.

- Evaluate rigorously the impact of changes to the teaching of writing in order to identify what is most successful and where further action is needed.

Main report

Achievement of pupils

Children enter the Reception Year with skills slightly below the levels expected for their age, although this fluctuates given the small cohort sizes. They make good progress in an interesting environment, becoming independent and exploring their own lines of enquiry. Attainment is broadly average by the end of the Reception Year, but higher than this in reading and aspects of numeracy.

The good progress continues through the rest of the school. The focus on promoting 'learning to learn' skills shows success when pupils try to emulate their animated animals, such as 'Oscar the owl', by being more evaluative or rising to challenges set. They collaborate well on tasks, in discussion, or when evaluating each other's work. Pupils develop new skills well and apply these effectively in different contexts, such as when solving problems in mathematics or undertaking investigations in science.

Having successfully taken action to raise achievement in mathematics, particularly for less-confident girls, the school's attention has turned to writing. The attainment of boys in writing has been lower than that of girls in some year groups, although other factors, such as whether boys have identified learning difficulties, have contributed to this gap. Different approaches are being adopted now, although these are at an early stage and have yet to show sustained impact.

Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs make good progress also, although this can be in quite small steps for pupils with significant learning difficulties. Carefully planned actions to meet their targets and effective support from teaching assistants enables these pupils to access all areas of learning.

From attainment that has been regularly above average, Year 6 test results fell to an average level in 2010. They rose in 2011 and attainment has continued to rise so that the current Year 6 pupils are working at well-above average levels in all areas. Attainment in reading is slightly above average by the end of Year 2 and securely above average by the end of Year 6. Inspection evidence confirms the strongly expressed views of parents and carers that their children make good progress.

Quality of teaching

The qualities of a Year 5 and 6 English lesson characterised much of the teaching observed and supported the strongly held views of parents and carers and their

children that teaching is good. The teacher's engaging manner, high expectations and skilled questioning captured the pupils' attention and challenged their thinking as they prepared to write instructional text in themed paragraphs. The follow-up activities were pitched well, taking into account the pupils' ages and levels, and provided considerable challenge for the more able. As in almost all lessons, effective teaching and the deployment of the skilled teaching assistants make a significant contribution to the learning of individuals, particularly that of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs.

Teachers promote attributes such as resilience, encourage pupils to learn by their mistakes, and promote teamwork through collaboration on tasks and in discussion. The most effective teaching requires pupils to think, be creative and use their imaginations when responding to literature. Pupils receive effective feedback through marking so they understand how well they are doing and the steps to take to improve and meet their targets. Opportunities to engage pupils are missed in a small number of lessons, when the pupils listen to explanations of skills they have already mastered, or teachers do not question to probe their understanding.

The good teaching in the Reception Year is based on the regular assessment of the children so that activities provided meet their needs and interests. Adult-led sessions, such as teaching letters and sounds, are taught well and balanced carefully with opportunities for children to plan their own learning. Indoors, the classroom provides a wide range of well-resourced and interesting activities that attract the children. However, learning does not always flow freely between this and the outdoor area.

Reading is taught well and, as a result, pupils make good progress with this skill. Sessions teaching letters and sounds to younger pupils are undertaken at pace and targeted opportunities provided to catch up if they are falling behind. Pupils have frequent opportunities to read in school and at home and their love of books is enhanced by the interesting range available in the well-stocked library.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Discussions and school records show that the excellent behaviour seen during the inspection is typical of daily school life. This view is shared by parents and carers. Teachers and support staff manage behaviour constructively and consistently in lessons and around the school. All adults focus on raising self-esteem and encouraging pupils to take responsibility for their actions. There is a strong work ethic in all classrooms and pupils are highly motivated – even when teaching is less inspiring. The pupils' enjoyment of school is reflected in their punctuality and above-average attendance. Pupils with particular behavioural or social difficulties are catered for very well, so that their behaviour improves over time.

Pupils are quite clear what constitutes bullying and say it is not an issue as it simply does not occur. Parents and carers are in strong agreement and this is confirmed by school records. Year 6 'buddies' help children quickly settle into the Reception Year and develop their reading. This activity, their work on the school council and sharing their interests in school assemblies help to generate a sense of responsibility and a warm, family atmosphere. Pupils have a keen interest in ethical issues and regularly

bring forward ideas for fundraising.

Pupils learn to make responsible and reasoned choices which help them stay safe. Pupils say they not only feel safe, but are also taught how to recognise and deal with any risks they might face, both in and out of school. Parents and carers support this view very strongly. Sessions in the 'Forest School' help Reception-Year children understand how to play safely and establish boundaries to keep themselves safe. Regular, practical activities teach pupils how to avoid dangers, including when using the internet, and the school council has been involved in identifying how to make the site even safer.

Leadership and management

The headteacher's clarity of vision coupled with her drive and determination have been instrumental in raising achievement, improving teaching and identifying where further action is needed. This trend of improvement and the well-established evaluation and planning cycle provide a firm platform for the school's future development. Members of staff are reflective and want to do the very best for the pupils. To this end, they are constantly seeking ways to improve teaching by learning from each other and observing experts in other schools. The headteacher sets clear goals for improving their teaching and monitors progress carefully. Subject leaders make a strong contribution to driving improvement in their areas and supporting their colleagues. However, the monitoring of the teaching of writing is not robust enough to identify precisely what is most effective and where further changes are needed.

The governing body monitors the school's work rigorously and holds the headteacher to account for the pupils' achievement. It takes very seriously also its responsibility for ensuring that safeguarding requirements are met and implemented effectively. This reflects the confidence of parents and carers that the school takes great care of their children.

The school promotes equality and tackles discrimination effectively. The circumstances of pupils and their families are known well and support is tailored sharply towards meeting their needs. By carefully checking the progress of individuals, effective action is taken if there is any sign of underachievement. As a result, any gaps in achievement are either specific to a cohort or closing.

The curriculum is outstanding because not only does it focus sharply on basic skills, but also it brings learning to life through the themes pupils study and contributes to their exceptionally positive attitudes to learning and excellent conduct. The recent theme of 'being an environmentalist' was stimulated by Year 1 and 2 pupils reading 'The Borrowers', Year 3 and 4 pupils studying the poem 'The Giants are Coming', while Year 5 and 6 pupils used 'The Iron Man' as a beginning before considering the impact of climate change. Provision for sport has developed considerably and supports very effectively the drive to develop teamwork skills. A link with a Ugandan school gives pupils experience of different peoples and cultures. Furthermore, by celebrating similarity and diversity and considering common values across different societies, pupils learn what it is to be a global citizen.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	54	42	2	2
Primary schools	14	49	32	6
Secondary schools	20	39	34	7
Special schools	33	45	20	3
Pupil referral units	9	55	28	8
All schools	16	47	31	6

New school inspection arrangements have been introduced from 1 January 2012. This means that inspectors make judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September to 31 December 2011 and represent judgements that were made under the school inspection arrangements that were introduced on 1 September 2009. These data are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Primary schools include primary academy converters. Secondary schools include secondary academy converters, sponsor-led academies and city technology colleges. Special schools include special academy converters and non-maintained special schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning and development taking account of their attainment.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Attendance:	the regular attendance of pupils at school and in lessons, taking into account the school's efforts to encourage good attendance.
Behaviour:	how well pupils behave in lessons, with emphasis on their attitude to learning. Pupils' punctuality to lessons and their conduct around the school.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving based on its self-evaluation and what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Floor standards:	the national minimum expectation of attainment and progression measures.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the governors and headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.
Safety:	how safe pupils are in school, including in lessons; and their understanding of risks. Pupils' freedom from bullying and harassment. How well the school promotes safety, for example e-learning.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



26 April 2012

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Colne Engaine Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School, Colchester, CO6 2HA.

Thank you for the warm welcome you gave me when I visited your school recently. I saw that you work very hard and are proud of the part you play in school life. I was particularly impressed by your confident answers to my questions. I have judged that Colne Engaine is a good school. The headteacher, staff and governing body try hard to help you all achieve of your very best. These are the things I liked most.

- Members of staff take very good care of you and make sure you are kept safe.
- Your exceptionally positive attitudes to learning and exemplary behaviour contribute significantly to your good progress.
- The curriculum provides very many enjoyable experiences for you through the themes you study and sports activities provided for you.
- Those of you who find learning difficult are given good support so that you can make the same good progress as others in your classes.
- Teaching is good and, in most lessons, effective use is made of assessment data to support your learning and progress.
- You understand very clearly how to keep yourselves safe and deal with any risks you might face.

I have asked your school to improve learning further by ensuring that teachers use questions to make you think more deeply and reducing the time you spend listening to their explanations before getting on with activities. I have also asked them to check carefully that the new methods for teaching writing are working as well as they should be. You can play your part in helping the school to get even better by continuing to work hard.

Yours sincerely

Martin Beale
Lead inspector

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