

Churchgate Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School, Harlow

Hobbs Cross Road, Harlow, CM17 0LB

Inspection dates

22–23 May 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	This inspection:	Requires improvement	3
Achievement of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Leadership and management		Requires improvement	3

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement. It is not good because

- Standards in mathematics are not high enough. Pupils are not always given sufficient time to practise new skills or to move quickly on to more challenging work.
- Teachers' expectations are occasionally too low and in some lessons too much time is spent giving guidance and direction. This slows the pace of learning and impedes pupils' progress.
- Pupils' interests are not always captured sufficiently well by the tasks teachers ask them to do.
- Teaching assistants are not always used to best advantage.
- Leaders are not checking thoroughly on the rate of pupils' progress, when looking at assessments, lessons or the work in pupils' books.
- Since the last inspection the steps taken by leaders to secure good teaching have not been quick enough or consistently effective.
- Governors do not hold the school to account for the achievement of pupils or improving the quality of teaching.

The school has the following strengths

- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is well promoted.
- Pupils feel safe in school, and parents and carers agree.
- Children in the Reception classes learn in exciting ways and make good progress.
- Standards in reading are rising in the school because of the strong focus on improving pupils' enjoyment of books.
- Pupils who find learning difficult now make good progress because of the high levels of support provided.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 14 lessons, of which 4 were joint observations with the school's senior leaders. In addition, inspectors made a number of short visits to classrooms and other activities at lunchtime and playtimes. Inspectors sampled pupils' work and listened to some pupils read.
- Meetings were held with two different groups of pupils; the Chairman and another representative of the Governing Body; parents and carers; school staff, including the leaders in charge of English, mathematics, special educational needs, and the Early Years and Foundation Stage. A telephone conversation was held with a representative of the local authority.
- Responses from 48 parents or carers on Ofsted's Parent View website were taken into account. Contacts with parents at the start of the school day, two meetings and a letter were also considered.
- Inspectors observed the work of the school and looked carefully at numerous documents, including checks on teaching; reports for governors' meetings; information relating to support for pupils whose circumstances make them vulnerable and pupils supported by the pupil premium, responses to a staff questionnaire; and policies and records relating to pupils' achievement, attendance, punctuality, behaviour and bullying. Inspectors also reviewed the safeguarding arrangements in the school.

Inspection team

David Cousins, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Annetta Minard

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This school is smaller than the average primary school.
- Most of the pupils are of White British heritage and fewer than average numbers of pupils are from minority ethnic groups. Few pupils are learning to speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported at school action is average. The proportion supported at school action plus or through a statement of special educational needs is below average.
- There are fewer pupils known to be eligible for free school meals, in local authority care or from forces families, than in most primary schools. These pupils are supported by additional government funding through the pupil premium.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for attainment and progress.
- A new Chairman of the Governing Body was elected this term.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the proportion of good and outstanding teaching, so that pupils make consistently good or better progress by ensuring that
 - teachers reduce the time taken to introduce lessons, and increase their expectations of what all pupils are capable of achieving
 - planning provides exciting tasks so that pupils' attitudes to their learning improve
 - pupils are always clear about what they are to learn and have plenty of time to practice new skills
 - adults regularly check how well pupils are doing in lessons, and adjust activities in response to pupils' understanding so that their progress accelerates
 - more effective use is made of other adults so that pupils' learning benefits from the high levels of support available.
- Raise achievement in mathematics by
 - analysing and using information about progress more effectively to quickly identify any underachievement and ensure faster progress, particularly for more able learners
 - providing training that improves teachers' subject knowledge.
- Improve the quality of leadership and management by
 - ensuring leaders are held to account for improvements and that they move quickly to ensure good or better teaching enables pupils to maximise their achievement
 - providing further training for governors about their responsibilities and in analysing data so that they can more closely check on the school's performance and be less reliant on information provided by leaders
 - arranging an external review of governance to be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and governance may be improved.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Despite recent developments, too few pupils make good progress, particularly in mathematics. This is because teachers do not always make sufficient demands on them in lessons and teachers' understanding of the subject is not always crisp enough. Although more-able pupils attain average standards, some are capable of achieving more and the school has only recently begun to identify precisely which pupils are not making enough progress.
- While pupils' progress in Key Stage 1 is adequate in English, they do not make good enough progress in mathematics and attainment at the end of Year 2 is lower than expected.
- Over the last three years pupils' attainment in mathematics has been below the national average by the end of Key Stage 2. In 2012, attainment was average in English but remained below average in mathematics. Attainment in reading was stronger than in writing. This year attainment is on track to be higher than in previous years due to the effective strategies the school has introduced. However, work remains to ensure that all pupils, especially the more able, reach the level of which they are capable, notably in mathematics.
- Pupils eligible for support from the pupil premium benefit from extra adult support in lessons. In 2012, pupils in Year 6 known to be eligible for the pupil premium attained the same as all the other pupils in English and higher in mathematics. In some year groups and subjects these pupils make good progress and the gap in attainment is closing but this is still too mixed across the school.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs receive additional help which helps them make good progress. This means these pupils are beginning to catch up with other pupils.
- Most pupils, including those from minority ethnic groups, achieve well in learning to read. Pupils enjoy a wide range of books and talk enthusiastically about the ones they like. While readers use appropriate skills to read unfamiliar words, the school's programme for teaching pupils the sounds letters make (phonics) has only been recently introduced. Positive impact from this programme is beginning to show in the youngest pupils' spelling and use of grammar in writing.
- Children typically start in the Reception class with skills and knowledge that are at the level expected for their age. This is especially true in their levels of maturity and this helps them to make a confident, settled start. Because of increasingly good teaching and the strong relationships with adults, children make good progress and are well prepared for work in Year 1.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- Despite some good teaching there is too much variation in the quality of teaching across the school. In too many lessons, teachers do not have high enough expectations of what their pupils, particularly the most able, can achieve. Recent improvements in teaching are not yet showing their full effect on pupils' learning and progress.
- In some lessons, teachers talk for too long and the opportunities for pupils to get on with their work are limited. As a result pupils' attention wanders because they sit for too long and their learning suffers.

- The process for sharing what lessons will be about are not always focused on what pupils will learn and frequently only set out what pupils will do. This means pupils are not clear about the new skills they will acquire and are not sure how they will know when they have been successful in a lesson.
- During lessons, some teachers do not check pupils' progress frequently enough to see how well they are doing or change the activities to ensure that pupils make more rapid progress. As a result some pupils find the work too easy. Recent improvements in marking across the school help pupils to understand where they are making progress and where they need to work harder.
- Teaching assistants regularly work with groups outside the classroom and despite some good support for the most vulnerable pupils and those with special educational needs, it restricts the oversight of teachers, and their ability to make any necessary adjustments to learning. Additionally, when teaching in the classroom is good it means these pupils do not benefit from this experience.
- The best teaching observed included a good understanding of the way individuals learn and what was required to ensure they learned well and maximised their achievement. In these sessions teachers give pupils time to develop their new skills and this is an important reason why pupils' work improves. For example, pupils in Year 2 were encouraged to reach higher levels in their writing due to the teacher's decision to give them an extended time to work independently. This meant that their descriptions of a setting to create a mood were well developed.
- In Reception, children enjoy a good range of activities. Teachers and other adults plan opportunities in response to children's interests, and develop their use of language skilfully. Children work well together in groups and listen to each other's ideas carefully. There is a good balance between activities supported by adults and those that children select for themselves. This helps to develop their independent learning skills.

The behaviour and safety of pupils

requires improvement

- Although pupils' get on well, and they behave appropriately, their attitudes to learning are not well supported by consistently engaging or challenging lessons and sometimes they become distracted. There are too few opportunities for pupils to build strong independent learning skills.
- In lessons and around the school pupils are polite and courteous to each other and visitors to the school, and this leads to a calm atmosphere in which pupils are happy.
- Pupils feel safe in school and parents and carers agree. Pupils are aware of the need for internet safety and know how to ensure it. The school site is now secure and these changes help pupils to know they are safe when in school. Pupils say that any concerns they may have about behaviour or safety are dealt with quickly by the school and that there is always an adult to whom they can turn if they have any sort of difficulty.
- Pupils are aware of the different types of bullying, which have been discussed in lessons and assemblies. They know how to deal with these situations by reporting them to an adult.
- School leaders have been effective in improving pupils' attendance to a broadly average level through appropriate communication with parents and a positive system of rewards.

The leadership and management

requires improvement

- The school has reacted too slowly to improving the weaknesses highlighted by the previous inspection. Not enough has been done by leaders, managers and governors to ensure good teaching and good achievement for all groups of pupils.
- Procedures for checking the work of the school, such as looking at pupils' books, observing teaching and analysing pupils' progress information, have recently been sharpened. However, the findings from these activities are not being used systematically by senior leaders and governors to check whether or not their actions to bring improvement have been successful.
- The systems for managing the performance and training of teachers have not been effective in improving the teaching of a few members of staff. Although some teachers have benefitted from well-targeted training the targets set to improve their practice are not sufficiently focused on accelerating pupils' progress.
- Parents expressed concerns through Parent View about the progress their children make, the quality of teaching and elements of the leadership of the school. Inspectors agree that these areas are not yet good enough and require improvement.
- The school supports pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development effectively. Pupils have productive opportunities to take part in a range of events such as after-school clubs and educational visits. Other focused activities, for example a 'healthy-living' week, make learning enjoyable.
- Pupil premium funds are used to enable those pupils who are eligible to achieve at least as well and sometimes even better than other pupils. Leaders are aware that some more able pupils are not achieving as much as they should.
- Procedures for safeguarding meet requirements and are regularly checked by leaders and managers.
- The local authority has recently recognised the urgency for the improvements required at Churchgate. While it now has appropriate plans in place for the challenge and support needed, these have not had a full impact on the teaching, learning or leadership of the school.

■ The governance of the school:

- The governing body is supportive of the school and its pupils but they do not provide sufficient challenge to leaders. Their lack of first-hand knowledge about the school's performance has meant they have not been able to judge the school's effectiveness successfully. This means that they have not held the school's leadership to account effectively for the improvements in the quality of teaching needed since the last inspection. Recent changes in the leadership of the governing body provide increased rigour in tackling the school's weakness. Governors are clear as to how the budget has been spent, including the impact of pupil premium funding on pupils' achievement, and are involved in managing teachers' performance. However, they are not robust enough in ensuring that rises in pay are linked closely to good leadership or good teaching. They are aware of the need for greater training and a local authority review of governance is planned.

What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	115170
Local authority	Essex
Inspection number	405570

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	198
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Simon Tucker
Headteacher	Jonathan Tye
Date of previous school inspection	15 & 16 February 2011
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