

St Nicholas Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School

The Street, Tillingham, Southminster, Essex, CM0 7TJ

Inspection dates

10–11 July 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		Good	2
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

- Pupils' progress across the school is inconsistent. Most pupils make expected progress, but not enough make good gains in learning.
- Teaching is not consistently good. Teachers' targets for their own performance lack sufficient impact.
- Teachers' marking is not always helpful in identifying what must be improved, especially in mathematics. Teachers do not make clear to pupils what level they are working at or aiming for.
- Tasks are not always matched well to pupils' different abilities, particularly for the more-able.
- In some lessons, teachers do not give pupils enough time to think for themselves or solve problems on their own and this limits progress.
- Teachers with responsibilities do not always check fully how well pupils are learning or being taught in different subjects.
- Governors are not good at holding the school to account for the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement because they rely too much on what senior leaders say about school outcomes rather than checking for themselves.

The school has the following strengths

- The headteacher's well-focused strategies have improved the quality of teaching and this has raised pupils' achievement this year.
- Pupils behave well and have good attitudes to learning. They feel safe and well cared for.
- Attendance has improved and is now average.
- Pupils' overall progress in English and mathematics has improved this year. Phonics (linking letters and sounds) has improved significantly because it is now taught well.
- The school promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well through its strong links with the community and local church.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed eight lessons or part-lessons jointly with the headteacher. In addition, he observed a specialist intervention session, observed a break time, scrutinised pupils' work and listened to pupils read.
- Meetings were held with pupils, the headteacher, teachers with responsibilities for subjects, members of the governing body, a local authority improvement adviser and the diocesan education adviser.
- The inspector scrutinised a variety of school documents, including the school's self-evaluation, the school's development plans, behaviour and incident records, minutes of governing body meetings, monitoring reports from the local authority, documents relating to the pupils' attainment and progress and the management of teachers' performance and safeguarding. He also took into account the findings from the previous inspection report.
- The inspector considered the views expressed in 17 questionnaires returned by school staff, along with the 25 responses to the online Parent View survey and two letters received from parents.

Inspection team

David Thomas Hatchett, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This school is smaller than most primary schools.
- The school serves the village of Tillingham, surrounding villages, and the nearby town of Southminster in south east Essex.
- The proportion of pupils for whom the school receives the pupil premium is slightly below the national average. This is additional funding provided by the government for pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals, those who are looked after, and pupils with a parent in the armed services.
- Most pupils are White British. Very few speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs receiving extra support through school action, school action plus and through a statement of special educational needs is above average.
- Pupils are taught in five classes. Three are of mixed age.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum standards for pupils' attainment and progress.
- Since the last inspection, there have been significant changes to the staffing in the school. A new headteacher was appointed in January 2012, and a new Chair of the Governing Body took up post in June 2012. The deputy headteacher was absent during the inspection.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching so that more is good or better, and leads to accelerating progress and higher attainment by:
 - ensuring that teachers plan activities that are well-matched to pupils' capabilities, particularly the more-able
 - giving pupils more opportunities in lessons to work things out for themselves or to solve problems on their own
 - improving the quality of marking, particularly in mathematics, so that pupils know what must be improved and have a good understanding of what level they are working at.
- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management by:
 - ensuring that leaders at all levels are fully involved in checking how well pupils are taught and learning in different subjects
 - ensuring that targets in the school improvement plan, and those used for managing teachers' performance are sufficiently challenging and are linked effectively to how well pupils achieve
 - ensuring that the governing body find out for themselves how well the school is performing and use pupil performance data to hold senior leaders to account more robustly
 - an external review of governance should be undertaken in order to assess how leadership and governance may be improved.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Too few pupils make consistently good progress through the school because there is variation in the quality of teaching. When work is not well-matched to pupils' different needs, particularly those who are more-able, their progress slows.
- Children start school with knowledge and skills that are below those expected for their age. Pupils' progress in Years 1 and 2 is adequate, but uneven, because teaching in these years is inconsistent.
- In 2012, the percentage of Year 1 pupils meeting the expected standard in the phonics screening check was well below average. In 2013, Year 1 pupils' achievement in phonics improved significantly to be above the expected standard. Pupils' respond well to the improved teaching of phonics and the use of new resources, and this has improved reading and writing skills through the school.
- In 2012, standards in Year 2 rose in reading, writing and mathematics. Pupils' attainment was below average in reading and mathematics and significantly below in writing. Improved learning, particularly in reading and writing, has accelerated pupils' progress and current attainment is closer to the national average, although it is still below.
- Most pupils make the expected progress in reading, writing and mathematics as they move through Years 3 to 6. Year 6 attainment is average in reading, writing and mathematics. Standards are rising because pupils' progress is accelerating, but it is not consistently good in every year. Unvalidated results from the 2013 national curriculum assessments show significant improvements in the progress made by pupils between Years 3 and 6.
- Pupils' progress in mathematics has improved due to a programme of planned training and targeted support for teachers led by the headteacher with support from the local authority.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational make progress similar to their peers. There are occasions when these pupils benefit from good intervention and small group work that is matched closely to their specific needs. A typical example of this was a good one-to-one phonics session led by a well-trained teaching assistant. However, work is not always pitched at the right level for this group of pupils in class.
- There were not enough pupils known to be eligible for free school meals in Key Stage 2 in 2012 to comment on their attainment without identifying them. However, over the school, the progress of this group of pupils is now accelerating due to the appropriate use of the additional funding, which pays for small group work and suitable support.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- Teaching does not lead to consistently good learning and progress for all pupils. The school's accurate records show that teaching still requires improvement in some classes.
- Where teaching is not good, mostly but not exclusively in Key Stage 1, there is not a good match between the activities provided and pupils' specific learning needs, particularly for those who find learning easy. Teachers sometimes spend too much time talking to the whole class and this

means that there is too little time for pupils to learn and find out things for themselves. This restricts their independence and the opportunities provided to further develop their enquiry and research skills. Teaching is particularly weak when pupils are taught by short-term teachers.

- The quality of marking is variable. In English, it often pinpoints what pupils must do next. However, too often in mathematics, pupils are not given clear guidance about what levels they are currently working at or what must be done to move to the next level of development. Although pupils have targets in English and mathematics, marking rarely refers to them.
- Some of the teaching in the Early Years Foundation Stage and in Key Stage 2 is good, and consequently pupils achieve well. Where teaching is effective, especially in Key Stage 2, clear learning objectives are set. Pupils are told what success looks like and teachers check individuals' progress throughout the lesson. Teachers show good subject knowledge and ask probing questions to help pupils learn more. They direct the additional adults well to support pupils who find learning difficult, so that they catch-up quickly with their peers.
- Activities chosen by teachers, where learning is good, are exciting, engaging and are well suited to pupils' differing needs. For example, in a good Year 2 mathematics lesson, pupils used the school grounds to find multiplication facts that were hidden as part of a treasure hunt for numbers. Pupils' thoroughly enjoyed the learning activity and engaged with it very well, making good gains in their understanding of multiplication facts.
- Most parents are satisfied with how well their children are taught. Inspection evidence from lesson observations, work scrutinies and progress data suggest that teaching is now improving in the school under the well-focused guidance of the headteacher.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Pupils' behaviour in lessons and around the school is good, and staff, pupils and most parents agree. Pupils are polite, considerate and work well with each other and adults. There are positive relationships in most classes and lessons.
- The school has improved the behaviour of pupils whose behaviour is challenging or who find learning difficult. The action taken has resulted in the number of fixed term exclusions being reduced significantly this year.
- Pupils are eager to learn. They concentrate well and work hard. Very occasionally, where activities are mundane or not matched well to their capabilities, their attention wanders and they lose concentration.
- Pupils say that they feel safe in school. Most parents agree that the school keeps their children safe. However, pupils' understanding of e-safety is not secure, and some pupils are not sure how to stay safe when using computers.
- Pupils have a good understanding of the different types of bullying, for example, name calling, and say that bullying incidents, whilst rare, are usually dealt with quickly. Pupils say that they all know an adult that they could go to if they needed help with a concern or difficulty they might have.
- Pupils are punctual to school. Their attendance has been low in previous years but has markedly

improved this academic year and is now average. This is because the measures taken to improve attendance have been effective. For example, the school has introduced certificates and prizes in assembly to reward those with excellent attendance. The proportion of pupils that are absent much more than average has reduced and is now in line with the national average for primary schools.

The leadership and management

requires improvement

- Not all the weaknesses in teaching and achievement have been eliminated. Significant staffing changes have not helped. However, the headteacher has made a good start to improve teaching quality and accelerate pupils' progress.
 - The school's plans for improvement are detailed but targets and how success is measured are not always challenging enough. In places, the school's self-evaluation paints too rosy a view, for example, in relation to pupils' achievement and the quality of teaching.
 - Teachers with responsibilities for subjects are developing in their roles. They are beginning to scrutinise pupils' work in different subjects, but they are not yet sufficiently involved with checking how well pupils are learning and achieving in lessons, and over time, to enable them to contribute well to the drive for improvement.
 - The headteacher has started to improve teaching with some success. She is a good role model in her own teaching. Inspection judgements on the lessons observed during the inspection matched the school's evaluations because the headteacher has an accurate understanding of where the best and least effective teaching is in the school. Lesson observations are very detailed and useful feedback has worked well in supporting a number of teachers to improve their teaching and to remedying key weaknesses.
 - The school has suitably dealt with the areas for improvement identified at the previous inspection. As a result, better teaching of phonics has led to significant improvements in pupils' reading achievement in Year 1 this year. The improvements in teaching demonstrate the school's commitment to providing pupils with equal opportunities to learn, and gaps between the school's performance and that seen nationally are beginning to narrow. The school is a harmonious community where discrimination is not tolerated.
 - The school promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well. There are strong links with the local church, including weekly visits from a member of the vicar's team, who lead assemblies and provide opportunities for reflection and collective worship. Assemblies encourage pupils to link religious values to their own lives, as observed during the inspection, when pupils learned about the concept of personal responsibility. The school has established good links with a local academy to which many pupils transfer.
 - The school is supported by the local authority and diocesan education advisers, who visit the school regularly to observe teaching and check how well the school is performing. The local authority has provided high levels of support since the previous inspection, and has an accurate understanding of how well the school is doing, supported by a recent in-depth review, the findings of which match those of this inspection.
 - **The governance of the school:**
 - Governance requires improvement. Governors are experienced and are committed to the school. They visit the school regularly and are well known to staff. Regular training ensures
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that they understand current government requirements. Meetings are well organised and governors have a developing knowledge of the school's performance data. However, minutes of meetings rarely indicate that governors ask challenging questions based on pupil progress data and information about the quality of teaching.

- The governing body gets a wealth of information from the headteacher and the local authority, but does not take enough steps to confirm for itself that senior leaders' view of the school's performance is correct and that self-evaluation is fair and accurate. The targets that teachers are set, to improve their performance, are not always easy to measure, and are not always focused on the quality of their teaching and how well pupils achieve. Pay is not always fully related to performance, although there are clear processes in place to introduce this shortly.
 - The governing body is beginning to ensure that spending on the pupils premium funding provides value for money. They ensure that the school meets statutory safeguarding requirements.
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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	115122
Local authority	Essex
Inspection number	405565
Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	5–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	110
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Stephen Holgate
Headteacher	Paula Hagan
Date of previous school inspection	22 March 2011
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