

Rickling Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School

Saffron Walden, Essex, CB11 3YG

Inspection dates 12–13 September 2013

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|--------------------------------|----------------------|-----------------------------|----------|
| Overall effectiveness | Previous inspection: | Good | 2 |
| | 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 | | Good | 2 |

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

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

- Pupils have not made consistently good progress in the last three years at Key Stage 2, particularly in writing and mathematics.
- The quality of teaching has been variable over time, especially at Key Stage 2. Teachers do not always set work that matches the abilities and interests of the pupils in their classes.
- Pupils' attainment in English and mathematics were below national averages in 2012 at the end of Year 6.
- Pupils are not always given enough guidance on how to improve their work, especially in mathematics. There are too few opportunities for them to respond to teachers' written comments, especially in upper Key Stage 2.
- Improvements to teaching have been slowed because there have been significant changes in staffing including at leadership level.

The school has the following strengths

- The executive headteacher has taken decisive action to improve teaching. As a result, pupils' progress is accelerating rapidly in Key Stage 2. The very recent appointment of an assistant headteacher is already having a good impact on monitoring the work of the two schools.
- Partnership arrangements with Farnham Church of England Primary School are having a positive impact on pupils' learning. There are good opportunities for shared curriculum and enrichment activities, including a wide range of sports and residential visits.
- Governors work closely with senior leaders to secure rapid improvements, and have ambition for the school.
- Pupils have positive attitudes towards learning, behave well and enjoy coming to school.
- Parents speak warmly about the school. The strong sense of community ensures that pupils are safe and well looked after.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector visited all of the classes and observed all of the teachers. Most observations were made alongside the executive headteacher. The inspector also made a number of other short visits to classrooms.
- The inspection of Farnham Church of England Primary School was carried out at the same time as this inspection. Inspectors held joint meetings with senior leaders, members of the governing body and a representative of the local authority.
- The inspector heard pupils read, and looked at work from each year group in Key Stage 2, much of this with the executive headteacher.
- The inspector looked at a range of documents, including the school improvement planning, and records on behaviour, safety and attendance. He also looked at information on individual pupils' progress and teachers' performance, and records of meetings held by the governing body.
- The inspector met with pupils, talked to staff, and spoke to parents. He also spoke to the school's education adviser.
- The views of parents were obtained through the 47 responses to the on-line Parent View survey. Written comments from 11 members of staff were also considered.

Inspection team

Brian Netto, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This is smaller than the average-sized primary school. Pupils are taught in four classes, a Reception class and three mixed-aged classes.
- Most pupils are from White British backgrounds. A small number are from a wide range of minority ethnic backgrounds. Few of these speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium is below average. This is additional funding provided for looked after children, pupils eligible for free school meals and other specific groups of pupils. In this school, it applies to the second group only.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs supported through school action is below average. The proportion supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is broadly average.
- The school federated with Farnham Church of England Primary School in January 2012, when it also became voluntary aided. The two schools share the same executive headteacher, assistant headteacher, special educational needs coordinator, subject leaders and governing body.
- The school provides a breakfast club managed by the governing body. Pupils also attend an after-school club which is run by external providers. This was not part of the inspection.
- The school does not meet the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- Since the previous inspection, a new executive headteacher and assistant headteacher have been appointed. There have also been significant changes in staffing and in the governing body.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching to be consistently good or better, so that all pupils achieve well, by:
 - sharing best practice in marking so that pupils better understand their next steps in learning and are given opportunities to respond to teachers' advice, particularly in mathematics
 - ensuring that pupils make better use of their targets in each subject so that they take more responsibility for improving their work.
- Accelerate progress at Key Stage 2, so that all pupils and particularly lower attaining boys make consistently good progress in writing and mathematics, by teachers:
 - making sure that work is better matched to the interests of all pupils, so that pupils including boys are always challenged
 - making better use of assessment information so that work is more carefully planned to meet the different abilities of the pupils.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Achievement requires improvement because over three years in different subjects pupils' progress has not been good enough. This is due to previous gaps in their knowledge and skills. In 2012, attainment in English dipped below average for pupils in Year 6. Attainment in mathematics was low. Progress across Key Stage 2 has been inconsistent.
- Current information shows that pupils are now making at least good progress in all subjects. By the time they reach Year 6, pupils' attainment in reading is above average. The school uses the results of the Year 1 screening check to target those needing further support. As a result, pupils enjoy reading and take every opportunity to read.
- Children join the Reception class with skills typical for their age. They quickly develop confidence in their academic and social development. By the time they enter Key Stage 1 they have developed skills above those expected in all areas of learning.
- By the end of Key Stage 1 they have reached standards above the national averages in reading, writing and mathematics. The introduction of a new approach to teaching letters and sounds (phonics) raised pupils' performance in the Year 1 check from below average in 2012 to above average in 2013.
- Boys of low attainment make expected progress and the gap with their peers is closing. More able pupils now make at least good progress.
- There were not enough pupils known to be eligible for free school meals in Year 6 in 2012 to comment on their attainment without identifying them. However, across the school, most pupils now make good progress, including those eligible for the pupil premium funding.
- Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs are well supported. As a result they make at least good progress from their varying starting points. Their needs are assessed regularly so that they receive the right sort of support and achieve well.
- The small numbers of pupils who speak English as an additional language are well supported, and make progress in line with their peers.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- Teaching requires improvement as it has been inconsistent over time, and this has led to significant underachievement in writing and mathematics at Key Stage 2.
- Information about how well pupils are doing has not been used well enough until recently to plan for their varying needs. More able pupils are making faster progress because data is now more accurate but lower attaining boys are not always provided with work that is appropriately challenging. Pupils are not always familiar with their next steps in learning so miss out on opportunities to improve their own work.
- Marking is not consistent across Key Stage 2 and pupils are not given sufficient guidance on what they need to do to improve their work. Opportunities for pupils to respond to the teachers'

advice are too infrequent, especially in mathematics for pupils in Years 5 and 6. Best practice in marking is not shared sufficiently.

- The quality of teaching is improving and there is much that is now good or better. Teachers and teaching assistants are effective in using questioning to help pupils deepen their understanding. Where teaching is most effective, pupils are encouraged to reflect on their learning and are given support to develop their ideas.
- Pupils achieve well when teachers check on their learning and help them correct their misconceptions. For example, the Year 3 and 4 mixed-aged class made good progress in applying their skills of multiplication to ingredients in a recipe. Work was well matched to their different abilities, and the teacher quickly moved them on in their learning when ready.
- Adult-led sessions for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage often help them to practise newly learnt skills. For example, children enjoyed experimenting with shapes and patterns using a variety of different materials, and were able to identify a wide range of different shapes.
- Pupils' social skills are well developed, and when asked to work in small groups or with a partner they do so sensibly and share ideas willingly. For example, pupils in the Year 3 and 4 mixed-aged class co-operated well when writing about a story which helped them understand what it means to be fair.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Pupils behave well and are very welcoming to visitors. They work well together and show a great deal of care and respect for each other. The vast majority of parents agree that behaviour is good. They say how much their children enjoy school, and feel staff are approachable and keep them well informed.
- Pupils say that bullying is rare because teachers encourage the acceptance of differences, and they feel confident that adults will deal quickly and fairly with any minor disputes.
- Pupils have a good understanding of how to keep safe, for example how to use the internet safely. They know they have a shared responsibility towards others, as shown by how the older pupils mentor younger ones and regularly help them with their reading and at play.
- Pupils enjoy coming to school as reflected in their above average attendance. The school works closely with parents to encourage regular attendance and all absences are swiftly followed up. The breakfast club provides a healthy and enjoyable start to the day for many of the pupils.
- Pupils whose circumstances make them vulnerable receive close attention and care. As a result, they make the same progress as their peers. This demonstrates the school's commitment to equality of opportunity and ensures that no-one is left behind.

The leadership and management are good

- The executive headteacher and governors provide a successful partnership between Rickling and Farnham, leading to significant improvements. Their successes have occurred during a time of considerable changes in staff, which have slowed the pace of these improvements.

- Leaders and managers, including governors, have taken decisive action to improve the quality of teaching. As a result, the legacy of underachievement at Key Stage 2 has been tackled successfully. Progress is now good across the school, and standards in writing and mathematics are rising.
 - The executive headteacher has supported teachers and teaching assistants in improving the way they assess pupils' work. This has helped them gain a more detailed picture of how well pupils are doing and plan work which better meets their needs. As a result, leaders and managers have an accurate view of the school's strengths and areas for improvement.
 - The school demonstrates its capacity to improve. The executive headteacher has successfully driven consistent ways of working, for example in the teaching of letters and the sounds they make. Regular checks on learning demonstrate that pupils' achievement is improving, especially in Key Stage 2.
 - Since the arrival of the new executive headteacher in September 2012, teachers' accountability has been increased. There are now regular meetings to check on pupils' progress and which hold teachers to account. Pupil premium funding is being well deployed.
 - Staff are fully supportive of the direction the school is taking. The view of one reflects that of all staff and governors: 'This warm and caring village school is a wonderful place to work in.' The school works at the heart of the local community as reflected in the weekly lunchtime visits by the 'Elderberries', a local group of senior citizens. Older pupils take time to make them feel welcome.
 - The subjects taught make a strong contribution to the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. This is further improved through the enrichment activities held jointly monthly with their partner school. The school makes the most of partnerships with other local schools to promote a wide range of sporting and cultural activities which promote effective health and well-being. As one pupil said: 'I think Rickling is amazing because we get to go to a lot of amazing places.' It is too early to judge what effect the primary sports funding is having on pupils' participation in sporting activities.
 - The local authority offers a 'light touch' to the school. It acts as a commissioner of services. Support has been increased during last year following the dip in performance at Key Stage 2.
- **The governance of the school:**
- Governors use their local knowledge well to help promote the school within the local community. They are kept well informed by the executive headteacher. This has increased their understanding of how well the school is performing in comparison to national expectations. They have an accurate view of what the school needs to do to address past underachievement and improve the quality of teaching.
 - The governing body has supported the school during difficult times brought about by significant changes in staffing. Their knowledge of how well teachers perform has helped them ensure that they hold teachers to account. However, they have yet to check that good teaching is rewarded. They manage the finances well, and have a good understanding of how this supports the needs of all the pupils. They attend appropriate training to keep themselves informed about changes in education. They ensure that all policies are up-to-date and that the school meets the statutory requirements in relation to safeguarding.

What inspection judgements mean

| School | | |
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| 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

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| Unique reference number | 115130 |
| Local authority | Essex |
| Inspection number | 425367 |

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

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| 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 | 100 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair | Rebecca Martin |
| Headteacher | Gillian Napier |
| Date of previous school inspection | 15 October 2008 |
| Telephone number | 01799 543274 |
| Fax number | 01799 540988 |
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