

# St James' Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School

Guildford Road, Colchester, CO1 2RA

**Inspection dates** 21–22 November 2013

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	This inspection:	<b>Requires improvement</b>	<b>3</b>
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

- Although progress has improved recently, teachers' planning, including that in the Early Years Foundation Stage, sometimes lacks detail and does not focus sufficiently on the needs of more-able pupils.
- Lessons do not always have sufficient pace.
- Good practice in the marking of writing is not yet evident in the marking of other subjects. Pupils do not have regular opportunities to respond to teachers' marking.
- Progress in writing is not rapid enough. Insufficient attention is given to handwriting and the presentation of work.
- School leaders do not always evaluate actions they have undertaken with sufficient rigour.
- The monitoring of teaching does not identify areas for development sufficiently concisely.
- Despite some good recent appointments, the leadership team is still building the capacity to implement and sustain new initiatives.
- Although improved, attendance remains below average.
- Despite their considerable commitment to the school, governors are not yet providing rigorous challenge to school leaders.

### The school has the following strengths

- Progress across the school has improved. Weak teaching has been largely eliminated in the last year.
- Pupils enjoy school and feel safe. Behaviour and attitudes to learning are good.
- This is a highly-inclusive school. Teaching assistants are well-prepared and effectively deployed.
- Pupils who speak English as an additional language make particularly rapid progress.
- Pupils supported by pupil premium funding make similar progress to the others.
- The breakfast club provides well for pupils who arrive at school early.
- Close links with the church contribute to the school's very positive ethos. Spiritual development is a particular strength.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 21 lessons, five of which were seen together with the headteacher.
- Meetings were held with a group of pupils, the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Governing Body and another governor, the school's senior and subject leaders and a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors took account of the 29 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View).
- Inspectors observed the school's work and looked at a range of school documentation, including records of school checks on the quality of teaching, the school improvement plan and records relating to behaviour, attendance, safeguarding and the tracking of pupils' progress. They also looked closely at pupils' written work from the current and previous school years, and listened to pupils reading.

## Inspection team

George Logan, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Diana Songer-Hudgell

Additional Inspector

Martin Bertulis

Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- St James' Church of England Primary School is a larger-than-average primary school.
- The large majority of pupils are from White British backgrounds. Around one quarter of pupils speak English as an additional language. This group includes pupils from a wide range of ethnic backgrounds, but they are predominantly of Eastern European heritage. The school experiences relatively high levels of pupil mobility.
- 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 slightly above average.
- The proportion of pupils for whom the school receives the pupil premium (additional funding for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals, those in local authority care and those from other groups) is above average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' progress and attainment in English and mathematics.
- The school offers a breakfast club. This provision is managed by the governing body and was evaluated as part of the current inspection. There is a private pre-school on site. This is managed and inspected separately.
- The current headteacher took up her post in November 2012.

### What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching so that a greater proportion is consistently good or outstanding, and raise teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve, by:
  - setting sharply-defined targets and providing the coaching and staff development opportunities necessary to enable staff to develop their skills
  - ensuring that planning is sufficiently detailed and closely aligned to pupils' needs
  - ensuring lessons have sufficient pace to move learning forward quickly while also allowing pupils sufficient time to develop their skills
  - making sure that staff demand consistently high-quality written work from pupils
  - building upon existing good practice in the marking of pupils' work and ensuring all teachers provide regular opportunities for pupils to respond to the advice they are given.
- Strengthen achievement across the school, to ensure that:
  - children in the Early Years Foundation Stage make as rapid progress in reading, writing and number as in the other elements of the curriculum
  - pupils across the school make consistent and rapid progress, particularly in writing, so that standards rise further by the end of Year 6
  - an effective programme for the teaching of handwriting is established and closely monitored
  - the needs of more-able pupils are recognised and provided for in teachers' planning.
- Ensure that current initiatives to promote higher levels of attendance have a greater impact on overall school attendance.
- Improve the leadership and management and governance of the school by:
  - rigorously monitoring and evaluating the impact of all initiatives and interventions

- ensuring that the monitoring of teaching is more incisive and developmental
- ensuring that all new appointments, at both senior and middle management levels, enhance the capacity of the school leadership team.

An external review of governance should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

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## Inspection judgements

### The achievement of pupils requires improvement

- Results at the end of Year 6 had been relatively static and broadly average for the four years up to 2012. Results for 2013, while average in reading and in grammar, punctuation and spelling, were below average in mathematics and writing.
- Too few pupils reached the higher Level 5, particularly in writing. Teachers' planning is not always sufficiently detailed to provide sufficient challenge for more-able pupils.
- Pupils' progress has not been sustained or consistent enough for achievement to be judged good. In most years, pupils, by the end of Year 6, make the progress expected nationally in English and mathematics. However, the progress of Year 6 pupils dipped significantly in 2013. This was largely due to weak teaching, and consequent poor progress, in Years 3 and 4, which meant these pupils were well over a year behind on starting Year 6. Concerted action to address this legacy of weak teaching helped these pupils catch up by the time they left but not to make the full progress of which some were capable.
- Accelerated progress within year groups is addressing remaining underachievement, particularly in mathematics. More Year 6 pupils are attempting the demanding Level 6 work in mathematics. There is further work to do in writing, particularly in developing opportunities to write in subjects across the curriculum. Handwriting, other than for older pupils, has not been systematically developed.
- Standards in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of Year 2 are broadly average, on a four-year rising trend. The proportion of pupils attaining Level 3 is similar to national figures.
- The gap between the attainment of Year 6 pupils supported by pupil premium funding and their peers was equivalent, in 2013, to just over one term behind the others in English and mathematics. However, funded pupils across the school generally make progress in line with the others.
- The teaching of phonics (the linking of sounds and letters) is satisfactory. A slightly above-average proportion of Year 1 pupils attained the expected standard in the phonics screening check in 2013. Younger pupils receive a systematic grounding in these skills, but with some variability in the teaching. Overall, pupils make steady progress in reading across the school.
- Children mostly enter Reception with skill levels below those found nationally. They make good progress in some aspects of their learning. However, there are too few opportunities taken to raise standards further in reading, writing and mathematics.
- This is a welcoming school. Provision for disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is being reorganised. Tracking systems now provide a close overview of the progress of this group of pupils which, in general, is in line with their prior attainment and matches that of comparable pupils nationally. Rigorously-evaluated support programmes facilitate increasingly rapid progress.
- Pupils who do not speak English as their first language, some of whom attend for short periods, are supported well. Most make good progress.

**The quality of teaching****requires improvement**

- While teaching has improved and much is now good, it does not yet consistently inspire or challenge pupils sufficiently, and the pace of learning remains inconsistent. There is not enough consistently good or better teaching to ensure that pupils make good progress and sustain it. Teachers' expectations, particularly of the younger pupils, are not always high enough. Teachers do not always allow sufficient time for pupils to practise their skills.
- Teachers' planning is not sufficiently focused upon the needs of individual pupils. While lower-attainers are generally well provided for, through the effective work of well-briefed teaching assistants, there is sometimes insufficient challenge for more-able pupils.
- Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage benefit from generally well-organised and purposeful teaching. However, planning does not focus sufficiently on challenging and extending individual children, so that this constrains their progress, particularly in reading, writing and number.
- Overall, the checking and supporting of pupils' progress has improved. Pupils have individual targets to focus their efforts to improve. Common expectations exist for setting out pupils' work, although neither handwriting nor the presentation of work is of sufficiently high quality, especially for younger pupils.
- The marking of writing mostly identifies what pupils need to do to improve. However, existing good practice has not yet been extended to other subjects. Opportunities for pupils to respond to marking are infrequent.
- Increased awareness by staff, better targeted support and more rigorous tracking of progress are ensuring better provision for pupils supported by pupil premium funding.
- In the better lessons, the pace of learning is brisk. In a Year 5 literacy session, pupils were extending their knowledge of story and character to add imaginative dialogue to a picture sequence. The task offered challenge, building well on pupil discussion. The teacher intervened as necessary to focus pupils' efforts. Pupils were keen to contribute ideas as to how tension could be conveyed within one speech bubble.
- The teaching of reading is generally effective. Guided reading sessions are tightly organised, with accurate pupil groupings and appropriate texts. They are mostly successful in developing pupils' interest and advancing their reading skills.

**The behaviour and safety of pupils****requires improvement**

- Despite the school's efforts, and a robust response to persistent absence, attendance remains generally below average.
- Pupils' behaviour is good. Procedures for managing behaviour are consistently applied and effective. Pupils' conduct outside the classroom is good. There have been no fixed-term exclusions for at least four years.
- Pupils' attitudes to learning are positive. They work well independently and respect each other. In the better lessons, pupils demonstrate a real enthusiasm for learning. However, when lessons lack pace, pupils soon disengage and learning suffers.

- Low-level disruption is infrequent. Pupils feel safe in school, confident that adults will resolve any difficulties. Parents and carers who offered their views had few concerns about behaviour.
- Pupils know that bullying may take different forms, but feel that it is rare. School records indicate that concerns are rigorously addressed.
- Pupils have a good appreciation of day-to-day risks. Older pupils know how to keep themselves safe and are well prepared for secondary school.
- The breakfast club is well managed and provides well for pupils who require care prior to school.

## The leadership and management

## requires improvement

- In the last year, school leaders have shown determination in improving teaching and learning. While inconsistencies remain, there are clear signs that teaching and progress are improving. Leaders' efforts to raise standards by introducing more rigorous pupil progress meetings and higher expectations of the progress pupils should make are beginning to pay off although, in the latter case, there remains more to do before these are high enough.
- The school is working to enhance the impact of its small leadership team. The newly-appointed and effective inclusion manager has contributed significantly to extending leadership capacity.
- Middle managers are enthusiastic and highly-motivated, although they are at an early stage of developing their roles.
- While existing performance management systems have led to the eradication of much weak teaching, there has not yet been the time or capacity to move teaching to be consistently good. With recent staff changes, there is now a closer link between teachers' performance and pay progression. The monitoring of teaching is regular, although objectives set for staff improvement are not yet rigorous enough, or sufficiently linked to professional development opportunities.
- The school's view of itself is accurate. The school improvement plan identifies appropriate priorities, although timescales and the criteria for success are not sufficiently explicit. School leaders closely monitor the impact of pupil premium funding. This funding is contributing to better gains in learning for eligible pupils in reading, writing and mathematics. However, the school does not analyse thoroughly enough the impact of several of the other initiatives it has undertaken.
- Topics and themes, although not always covered in sufficient depth, have been thoughtfully chosen to encompass a range of subjects. Clear policies and procedures support the teaching of reading, writing and mathematics. Pupils experience a good range of visits, visitors, events and extra-curricular clubs. Parents are very pleased with the opportunities provided through the breakfast club, which ensures pupils make a good start to the day.
- Although it is early to evaluate its impact, the school has a sustainable plan to improve the quality of sports coaching and pupils' health through the development of staff skills in coaching physical education, and to increase participation in after-school sports activities.
- Support from the local authority increased last year. Recent joint initiatives included the establishment of a formal school improvement committee.

- Spiritual development is a significant strength and the links between the school and the parish are close. Pupils' good social and moral development permeates all aspects of school life. Community links and links with parents and carers have improved in the last year.

■ **The governance of the school:**

- Governors show considerable commitment to the school and give readily of their time. They willingly undertake training and are eager to improve their skills and understanding. They have a realistic view of the school's strengths and vulnerabilities and readily seek external validation for their views. While they have an increasing understanding of data, and can compare the school's performance with national data, they remain over-reliant on the views of school leaders as to how well the school is doing. This has not always proved reliable. Governors are ready to challenge the school but recognise that this aspect remains underdeveloped. Governors are committed to ensuring equality of opportunity, tackle discrimination and promote good relationships. They now have a better understanding of the quality of teaching. With many new staff, pay and promotion are now more firmly linked to teachers' effectiveness. Governors carefully evaluate the impact of decisions about the use of pupil premium funding to close gaps in pupils' achievement. Governors ensure, along with senior leaders, that safeguarding arrangements meet national requirements. All other statutory duties are met.



## 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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	115131
<b>Local authority</b>	Essex
<b>Inspection number</b>	425237

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary aided
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	374
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Father Peter Walker
<b>Headteacher</b>	Pauline Batley
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	4 October 2011
<b>Telephone number</b>	01206 865747
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