

St Nicholas Church of England (Controlled) Primary School

Fairfield Road, New Romney, Kent TN28 8BP

Inspection dates

8–9 May 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	This inspection:	Inadequate	4
Achievement of pupils		Inadequate	4
Quality of teaching		Inadequate	4
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 has serious weaknesses.

- In Year 2, pupils' attainment is below average in reading and writing. Lower attaining pupils in Key Stage 1 are not making enough progress to help them keep up with their peers.
- In Year 6, pupils' attainment in writing is below average and pupils do not achieve well enough. Weaknesses in spelling, punctuation and grammar limit the quality of their writing.
- Pupils supported by additional government funding have a lot of ground to make up and gaps are not closing quickly enough.
- Weaknesses in teaching mean pupils' progress is uneven and this prevents standards rising more quickly. Sometimes, pupils' work is too hard for lower attaining pupils or too easy for the more able.
- Pupils do not always concentrate well enough because teachers do not always make sure that work is suitable for all abilities.
- Leaders' checks on teaching have not been thorough enough to ensure all groups of pupils make good progress.
- Leaders responsible for subjects are not yet having enough impact on improving teaching.
- The governing body does not ask enough questions about why some groups achieve better than others. This prevents them fully holding leaders to account.

The school has the following strengths

- Children make good progress in Reception because they are well taught. Leadership of this phase of the school is strong.
- The school is calm. Pupils conduct themselves well around the school and take good care of school equipment and other resources.
- Concerted action by leaders has led to pupils' progress in reading improving in Key Stage 2; standards are rising.
- Pupils' attendance has improved and is now broadly average.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 20 lessons, eight of which were joint observations with the headteacher or deputy headteacher. They listened to a sample of pupils read from Years 1, 2 and 6.
- Inspectors held discussions with pupils. They also looked at a range of their work and examined the school's information on pupils' attainment and progress.
- Meetings were held with representatives of the governing body, senior leaders, teachers and a local authority representative.
- Inspectors considered the 34 responses to the online Parent View survey and the few letters sent by parents.
- Inspectors considered responses to the 21 questionnaires returned by staff.
- Inspectors observed the school's work and looked at a number of documents, including plans for improvement and safeguarding arrangements. They also scrutinised records relating to behaviour and attendance, and records of school leaders' observations of teaching.

Inspection team

Eileen Chadwick, Lead inspector	Additional inspector
John Viner	Additional inspector
Peter Thrussell	Additional inspector

Full report

In accordance with section 44 of the Education Act 2005 (as amended), Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is likely to be of the opinion that this school requires significant improvement, because it is performing significantly less well than it might in all the circumstances reasonably be expected to perform.

Information about this school

- The school is larger than the average-sized primary school. The Early Years Foundation Stage consists of two Reception classes.
- The very large majority of pupils are White British and very few speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported through school action is below average. The proportion at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is above average. The majority of these pupils have speech and language difficulties or behavioural, emotional and social difficulties.
- The proportion of pupils supported through the pupil premium funding is above average. This is additional government funding provided for children in care and those known to be eligible for free school meals.
- 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, there have been many changes of teaching staff. The Chair of the Governing Body was appointed just under two years ago.
- A privately managed pre-school shares the same site as the school. Pupils from the school may attend the before- and after-school clubs held at the children's centre, which is also on the same site. All of this provision is subject to a separate inspection.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching so it is at least typically good by:
 - improving the teaching of phonics (knowledge of letters and their sounds) to lower attaining pupils in Key Stage 1 and ensuring that teachers help pupils to apply phonics skills when reading and writing
 - systematically teaching pupils how to improve their grammar, punctuation and spelling
 - using assessment information accurately to plan lessons which are hard enough for the more able pupils and develop lower attaining pupils' skills quickly
 - routinely checking during lessons to see if pupils find tasks too hard or too easy
 - ensuring teaching assistants enable lower attaining pupils to have the skills and confidence to do as much as they can for themselves.
- Raise pupils' attainment in Key Stages 1 and 2, including for those supported through additional funding, by:
 - improving pupils' progress in writing, especially for boys, pupils with special educational needs and lower attaining pupils
 - increasing the proportion making good progress in reading and writing in Key Stage 1 and in mathematics in Key Stage 2
 - improving pupils' spelling and their ability to apply phonics, to write in sentences and to form

their letters correctly

- ensuring lower-attaining pupils practise their sounds before reading their books and are heard to read more regularly.

■ Improve leadership and management by:

- developing more robust procedures to check the attainment and progress of different groups as pupils go through the school
- ensuring the checks made by school leaders identify the impact of teaching on how well different groups are learning
- enabling subject leaders to play a full part in improving English and mathematics teaching and learning across the school
- ensuring the governing body is able to evaluate the impact of teaching and other provision on the achievement of different groups, including pupils in receipt of pupil premium funding, so they are better able to challenge school leaders
- ensuring the school improvement plan shows more precisely how governors will check on the impact of initiatives on improving achievement.

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

An external review of the school's use of the pupil premium should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and governance may be improved.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

is inadequate

- Pupils' achievement is inadequate in reading and writing at Key Stage 1 and in writing at Key Stage 2. This is due to weaknesses in teaching, especially the teaching of lower attaining pupils.
- Year 6 pupils' attainment has been significantly below average for many years and pupils' under-achieve. In 2013, although progress in reading and mathematics improved, and continues to improve, pupils' progress in writing was not rapid enough.
- By Year 2, pupils' attainment is average in mathematics but below average in reading and writing. More able and middle attaining pupils make steady progress in reading in Key Stage 1. However, lower attaining pupils in Key Stage 1 are not heard to read regularly enough in school. They do not learn to apply phonics well enough when reading or writing. They do not learn to write in sentences well enough and some do not form their letters properly. In Year 2, weaker spelling sometimes impairs writing standards for middle and higher attaining pupils.
- Writing standards remain below average by Year 6, particularly for boys. Too few reach average and higher levels. The Year 6 work seen by inspectors shows higher and middle attaining pupils are improving in their ability to write in different styles and use more advanced vocabulary. However, lower and a few middle attaining pupils, who are often boys, do not develop their skills in learning to write in more complex sentences. Weaknesses in spelling, grammar and punctuation impair the quality of their writing. Pupils' handwriting improves well in Key Stage 2.
- The 2013 end-of-Year 6 assessment data shows that the attainment of pupils eligible for additional funding was lower than their peers by one year in mathematics and nine months in reading and writing. Current pupils supported by additional funding are making progress in line with their peers in reading and mathematics. However, their progress is slower in writing.
- Over time Key Stage 1 pupils eligible for pupil premium funding have achieved far less well than their classmates. In 2013 these pupils were about one year behind their peers in reading and writing and six months behind in mathematics. They currently make much slower progress than their peers in reading and writing and similar progress in mathematics.
- Disabled pupils and pupils with special educational needs, as well as pupils who speak English as an additional language, do not make enough progress. They receive individual and small group support which speeds up their progress. However, as with other pupils, they do not make enough progress in class lessons in reading and writing in Key Stage 1 and in writing in Key Stage 2. This is because, too often, their work is not set at the right level.
- Inspection evidence shows the school's actions are beginning to bear fruit. Progress in reading in Key Stage 2 is improving and standards in reading for the current Years 5 and 6 pupils are slightly above average. Standards in mathematics are also beginning to rise and are now broadly average in both years.
- Most children start in the Early Years Foundation Stage with skills that are below the levels typically found for their age. Good progress lifts their attainment so that their attainment is broadly average on entry to Year 1.
- Phonics screening checks for Year 1 pupils last year showed considerable improvement compared with the previous year although their attainment remained below average. Inspection evidence shows that overall phonics standards are continuing to improve but too slowly for lower attaining pupils because the work they are given is too hard.

The quality of teaching

is inadequate

- Teaching is inadequate because pupils do not achieve well enough over time. Moreover, it is too inconsistent from one year to the next. The high number of staff changes has had an adverse impact on the school's efforts to sustain improvements in the quality of teaching.
- Weaker teaching usually occurs when work is not pitched at the right level for pupils. This

happens in writing or in phonics lessons when steps are too hard for lower attaining pupils. Teachers do not teach basic skills such as grammar or punctuation well or demonstrate clearly how pupils need to apply phonics skills when writing.

- Learning in mathematics lessons is of variable quality. For example, teachers do not always explain activities clearly enough so that all pupils know what they are expected to learn. On other occasions, work is too easy for more able pupils or too hard for the lower attaining pupils. This is especially the case when pupils tackle verbal problems involving calculation. Teachers do not routinely check to see if pupils are finding tasks too hard or too easy.
- The quality of support provided by teaching assistants is inconsistent. In some classes, pupils learn well because additional adults are used well to help different groups to learn. In others, pupils' learning is not as strong because assistants do not develop pupils' skills and confidence enough so they can get on with their work on their own.
- Teaching is consistently good across Reception classes. In Reception, children enjoy an exciting range of activities and teachers develop children's speaking, reading, writing, mathematical, physical and personal skills well.
- Where learning is better in Key Stages 1 and 2, teachers successfully provide work which builds on pupils' previous skills. For example, in a Year 3 mathematics lesson, the teacher's effective planning ensured pupils of different abilities learned well. While more able pupils tackled division problems of greater complexity, other pupils undertook simpler division sums and word problems.
- Marking is largely effective and most pupils are clear about their targets for improvement.
- The atmosphere in classrooms is conducive to learning and based on mutual respect. Teachers plan activities that support the development of pupils' skills and knowledge in more than one subject. For example, during the inspection, a Victorian history topic was used well to enable pupils to write for different purposes and to extend their reading experiences.

The behaviour and safety of pupils

requires improvement

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement. It is not consistently good in lessons where teaching is less effective. Pupils have positive attitudes but lose concentration or become restless when they are unsure of what they need to learn.
- Pupils usually conduct themselves well outside lessons and are considerate to each other. They have a clear understanding of the difference between right and wrong and most behave in a sensible and orderly way as they move around the school. Pupils report that while most of them behave well, a few do not, although they say behaviour has improved over time.
- A small minority of parents expressed reservations about pupils' behaviour and some expressed concerns about the school's procedures for dealing with incidents of bullying. Evidence examined by inspectors and discussions with pupils do not support these parents' concerns about bullying. School records show there are few instances of bullying and any that do occur are investigated thoroughly.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good.
- Pupils say they feel safe and enjoy coming to school. Most parents who completed the Parent View questionnaire confirmed this and said their child was happy at this school. Pupils say that incidents of bullying, including name-calling and cyber-bullying, are unusual. Pupils say that the school deals with any incidents of inappropriate behaviour and they know who to turn if help is needed.
- Children in Reception make good progress in their personal development. They enjoy school and behave well. They develop their ability to concentrate well when taught by adults in groups or when they chose activities for themselves.
- Attendance is average and is continuing to improve. Persistent absence has been reduced because the school has applied more stringent attendance procedures in recent years. As a result, more families are now sending their children to school regularly.

The leadership and management**requires improvement**

- Leadership and management require improvement because neither achievement nor teaching are at least good. High staff turbulence in the last few years has had an adverse impact on the quality of teaching and pupils' progress.
- The headteacher's determined actions to improve pupils' achievement have started to have an impact on improving standards in reading and mathematics in Key Stage 2, in phonics for middle and higher attainers in Key Stage 1 and for improving attendance. This shows the school has the capacity to improve.
- School leaders have introduced a robust system for checking individual pupils' progress across the school. They also check the progress of pupils eligible for additional funding but do not effectively check on the attainment and progress of other groups, such as boys and lower attaining pupils.
- School leaders' checks on teaching are very regular. However, lesson checks have not consistently identified the impact of teaching on the progress made by different groups of pupils in different subjects. This prevents staff knowing exactly how they can improve their teaching to help all groups to learn.
- Staff changes have slowed the development of subject leaders' roles. Although their roles are now developing, leaders are not yet having enough impact on driving improvements in teaching and learning.
- The lack of precise subject monitoring has limited the school in evaluating the impact of initiatives for improving attainment. For example, there has been much training for teaching phonics but its impact has not been robustly monitored across the whole school. Consequently, some weaknesses have not been quickly addressed.
- School leaders have successfully revised arrangements for managing staff performance and setting targets for teachers. The results are used to obtain more suitable training than in the past and teachers' pay is now being linked to their performance.
- Improvement plans focus on the right priorities. However, there is not enough information to show how governors will be involved in evaluating the impact of improvement activities.
- The curriculum is not fit-for-purpose because it does not meet all lower attaining pupils' needs. The school does not meet its aim to provide equality of opportunity.
- The school suitably promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and provides some opportunities for sport and extra-curricular activities. It is using the primary school sports funding to employ more sports coaches and to establish a link with the local secondary school.
- The local authority provides intensive support due to high staff turbulence. The support is helping the school to bring about improvements to pupils' attainment in reading and mathematics. The school has found the support helpful, including for subject training.
- Safeguarding procedures and practices meet requirements and are effective.

■ The governance of the school:

- Governors are supportive and are keen for pupils to do well. They have received training and understand individual pupils' assessment data. While some understand the school's strengths and what it needs to do to improve, others are not able to fully challenge as well as support the school. They know how the additional funding is spent and check the impact on pupils' progress. However, they do not fully hold the school to account for discrepancies between the attainment of those receiving additional funding and others in the school. They do not regularly check the impact of the school's work for improving different groups' attainment and progress, for example that of boys in writing. Governors understand the management of teachers' performance and how this affects pay rises and promotion. They are clear about where general strengths and weaknesses in teaching lie, for example class organisation and management. However, they have less understanding about how well different groups of

pupils are learning, for example in phonics.

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	132829
Local authority	Kent
Inspection number	431024

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	319
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Helen Barrett
Headteacher	Frances Nash
Date of previous school inspection	14 March 2012
Telephone number	01797 361906
Fax number	01797 363118
Email address	headteacher@st-nicholas-newromney.kent.sch.uk

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