

St Christopher's CEVCP School

Bellflower Crescent, Red Lodge, Bury St Edmunds, IP28 8XQ

Inspection dates

1–2 October 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Requires improvement	3
	This inspection:	Inadequate	4
Leadership and management		Inadequate	4
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Inadequate	4
Quality of teaching		Inadequate	4
Achievement of pupils		Inadequate	4
Early years provision		Requires improvement	3

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires special measures.

- Leaders have been overwhelmed by managing the growth and expansion of the school. As a result, they have not prioritised their work appropriately and have not recognised the significant decline in the school's effectiveness.
- In the past, governors have failed to ensure that the school meets all statutory requirements. They have proved unable to halt the decline in teaching and achievement because they have not challenged the accuracy of the information they have received from leaders.
- Achievement is inadequate. In Key Stage 2, pupils do not make enough progress in writing and mathematics. The proportion of pupils reaching expected levels of attainment by the time they leave the school is low.
- School leaders have not provided sufficient guidance to teachers about what they should teach in each subject, how to improve their teaching, or the skills that pupils need to develop as they progress through the school.
- Teachers' subject knowledge in writing and mathematics is weak. Expectations of groups such as the more able are too low. The guidance teachers give to pupils, including the disadvantaged, and the help to support disabled pupils and those with special educational needs is not effective enough.
- Pupils too often become restless and lack concentration in lessons.
- Safeguarding procedures are not secure because risks are not assessed sufficiently well.

The school has the following strengths

- In a few classes, teaching interests and motivates pupils well. As a result, they make good progress and enjoy learning.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed parts of 20 lessons, six of which were seen jointly with the headteacher or deputy headteacher.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, the deputy headteacher, four school governors, a representative of the local education authority, and the leaders for English, mathematics and the Early Years Foundation Stage.
- The behaviour of pupils was observed in classrooms, around the school and at playtimes. Pupils were spoken to as inspectors observed them at work and play, and in formal discussions.
- Inspectors reviewed the school's safeguarding records, behaviour and incident logs, curriculum plans, assessment procedures and local authority visit records. They also looked at the school's action plans, information about the school's performance and minutes of governing body meetings.
- A range of pupils' work, in different subjects from classes across the school, was reviewed.
- Inspectors talked to parents after school and took into account 64 written responses to the Ofsted inspection questionnaire. There were insufficient responses to the online questionnaire, Parent View, for inspectors to take them into account.
- Inspectors took account of the 27 responses received to Ofsted's staff questionnaire.

Inspection team

Prue Rayner, Lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Rowena Simmons	Additional Inspector
Robert Bone	Additional Inspector

Full report

In accordance with the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires special measures because it is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the persons responsible for leading, managing or governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school.

Information about this school

- St Christopher's Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School is now larger than the average sized primary school. The school opened in a new purpose-built building in September 2012. Since that time it has rapidly increased in size and further new classrooms have been added during the summer break. Since the last inspection the number on roll has increased by about 50 pupils.
- More pupils than average start and leave the school at other than normal entry times. This is because a significant number of pupils come from a local United States military base and others leave to join the middle-tier provision in Bury St Edmunds.
- Most pupils are of White British heritage; increasing proportions are from different minority ethnic groups.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium (additional funding for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals or looked after by the local authority) is above average. This inspection report refers to these as 'disadvantaged pupils'.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported at school action, school action plus or by a statement or education, health and care plan is average.
- The school does not meet the government's floor standards which set the minimum expectations for attainment and progress.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching so that the overall quality is at least good by ensuring that:
 - work is set at the right level of difficulty for all pupils, including the most-able
 - teachers check carefully on pupils' learning and move them on quickly if they understand, or give extra support if it is needed
 - feedback helps pupils to understand how they can improve
 - teaching interests pupils so that they work hard, stay on task and do not disrupt their own learning or that of others.
- Raise pupils' attainment and improve their progress so that standards are at least in line with national averages by the end of Key Stage 2 by ensuring that:
 - assessments made by all teachers of pupils' work are accurate
 - all staff have the knowledge necessary to teach writing and mathematics effectively
 - teachers have high expectations regarding the quality of presentation and the standards pupils can reach in writing
 - girls are challenged to make good progress in mathematics
 - the impact of the extra support given to pupils who have special educational needs, and to those eligible for the pupil premium, is measured carefully, and that changes are made quickly when necessary.
- Urgently improve leadership and management, including governance, by ensuring that:
 - safeguarding procedures are tightly adhered to and all necessary risk assessments are in place
 - senior leaders concentrate on improving teaching, learning and achievement
 - systems are in place to plan and check on the school's work so that the most urgent priorities are identified and tackled quickly, and staff and governors know how and when progress will be monitored
 - all leaders use information about pupils' progress to monitor the quality of teaching and provide teachers with additional support where necessary so that they improve
 - pupils are taught how to keep themselves safe by understanding the different types of bullying, knowing what to do if it occurs

- the newly structured governing body are quickly trained so that they can check the school's work more effectively and hold leaders to account for the rapid improvements required.

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 management may be improved.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management

are inadequate

- Recommendations from the previous inspection and from Her Majesty's Inspector's monitoring visits have not been addressed. Leaders, including governors, have not taken effective action to improve the school so standards have declined in Key Stage 2; they are well below where they should be. Pupils make inadequate progress and significant weaknesses in teaching are evident.
- The priorities identified in the school's action plan do not directly address the most important issues and leaders have not ensured timescales and targets for improvement are met because they have become overwhelmed by other demands. As a result, the actions necessary to bring about rapid improvement to teaching and achievement have not been taken.
- Leaders have not checked the quality and effectiveness of teaching frequently enough; checks on how well staff make agreed changes are weak and little guidance has been given on what is expected in terms of improvement. Because teachers have not been supported well, or suitably held to account, the quality of teaching has declined. New systems are in place to enable the school to hold teachers to account for their pupils' progress. These have yet to influence improvement.
- Systems to check pupils' attainment and progress have been improved. However, because the assessments on which they are based are insecure, they do not give an accurate picture of attainment. The difference between the school's assessments of the 2014 Year 6 cohort and actual outcomes was unacceptably wide; leaders and governors were not expecting the marked fall in standards.
- Plans to teach the new curriculum are in place although they are not fully adapted to pupils' needs or implemented throughout the school. Statutory requirements to share curriculum information with parents through the school's website are not met. The primary sports funding is used to provide specialist teaching which engages pupils and is supporting them to develop improved skills. Specialist teaching is also providing improved learning opportunities in music. Pupils benefit from a wide range of visits and experiences which extend their understanding of the wider world and engage them in new and different opportunities.
- A new leadership structure has been established this term. While subject leaders lack experience they have positive intentions and are determined to bring about improvement. At this stage, improvement planning is not well enough focused to enable these leaders to influence, and bring about, the necessary changes.
- Many parents expressed positive views of the school and its leaders. However, about half the responses raised concerns about the school and about how much they know about their children's' progress. Similarly, while most staff expressed positive views, a number raised concerns about how well pupils' needs are met and how well leaders are enabling the school to improve. Inspection evidence confirmed the concerns raised.
- The school's relationship with the local authority is poor. Leaders and governors report a history of mixed messages and limited resources for the school which, they say, have created a significant range of challenges over and above those normally involved in leading and managing a primary school. The local authority does not recognise the same concerns. A school improvement board has been in place to monitor the work of the school, however, the support provided has not prevented the decline into inadequacy. Adviser support has been effective in supporting improvements in the Early Years Foundation Stage and in some aspects of literacy and mathematics teaching.
- Newly qualified teachers should not be appointed.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors have not held leaders to account for the performance of the school. Checks on the work of leaders have not been rigorous enough and governors have relied on leaders' analysis too heavily. As a result, the significant fall in outcomes in 2014 was not expected.

- Governors have not ensured that the school fulfils statutory requirements, for example, in relation to the information provided on its website. Checks of the school's safeguarding procedures have not been regular enough. Until very recently, governors have not ensured that the school's pay policy linked teachers' pay tightly to their performance. The governing body has not ensured that the weaknesses in teaching and achievement have been tackled.
- The school development plan does not provide sufficient detail about the key issues facing the school or the actions planned to make the necessary improvements. Nor does it identify how school leaders, including governors, can check on the progress being made. As a result governors cannot use the plan to measure progress or hold leaders to account.
- A new Chair of the Governing Body has been appointed. Structures and responsibilities have been reviewed. Performance related pay structures are being implemented and a better overview of financial spending established. While the budget remains in deficit and more governors need to be appointed, structures are now more rigorous. As one experienced governor said 'with these new arrangements in place, I feel I am just beginning again with a clearer understanding of what we need to do'.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are inadequate

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement. There is no doubt that the poor behaviour of some pupils slowed the progress of their classmates last year. Since then, a new behaviour policy has been implemented. Staff are taking greater responsibility for managing pupils' behaviour and leaders are taking less time to resolve incidents. Pupils are calm and quiet as they move around school and they play together happily at break and lunch time.
- Pupils' attitudes to learning vary across classes. Too often, pupils become restless and disengaged. This lack of motivation slows progress and is reflected in the limited effort pupils make to present their work accurately and neatly.
- Attendance fell last year to below the national average. The headteacher has taken determined steps to reduce the number of pupils who are persistently absent by undertaking home visits and referring families to the education welfare service. As a result of determined action by the school, attendance overall has risen to be in line with the national average this year, although it varies widely across classes and year groups.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is inadequate because school leaders have not ensured that safeguarding procedures are rigorously implemented. Appropriate recruitment checks are made and records contain the required information. However, risk assessments and scrutiny procedures to ensure staff are supervised until full clearance is received were not properly in place at the start of the inspection.
- Pupils were unable to tell inspectors about the basic principles of e-safety or to describe the different types of bullying that can occur. Pupils do know what to do if there is a fire at school. Many say they feel safe at school although some said this is more the case at morning break when there are more adults to supervise them and play is not as rough as it is at lunch-time.
- The school provides very effective care for its most vulnerable pupils, working well with families and wider services to ensure that their needs are met.

The quality of teaching is inadequate

- Teachers do not plan enough activities that engage pupils. There is no consistent approach to how pupils' work is assessed. As a result, work is not set to match the abilities of different pupils which means it is too easy for many and there are insufficient opportunities for the most able pupils to learn new knowledge and skills.

- Teachers' planning does not ensure that pupils learn important writing and mathematical skills in a systematic way. Pupils do not have enough opportunity to learn, develop and use new skills so that they are continually built on and understood well. This results in some gaps in learning. For example, there is a deficit in the pupils' knowledge of spelling strategies and number facts, which slows progress.
- Teachers rely too much on the use of worksheets and other resources that do not stretch pupils' thinking or encourage them to set their work out effectively. As a result, as they move through the school, pupils do not develop the skills and perseverance necessary to write and present their work neatly. Many do not present mathematical calculations with sufficient care or understanding.
- Too many changes and initiatives have meant that approaches to teaching, which have been agreed by staff, have not been implemented consistently. As a result, the quality of marking varies widely and most pupils do not receive meaningful verbal or written guidance on how they can improve their work. Very few pupils could identify which aspects of their work they were trying to improve.
- In a small number of classes, teaching engages pupils more purposefully, expectations of their learning draw on what they have done before and pupils support each other to make progress in their learning. Where the school employs specialist teachers in music and physical education, pupils respond to their learning more positively and make good progress in acquiring key skills.
- In some lessons, pupils who are disabled and who have special educational needs are well supported because teachers plan their work carefully and teaching assistants intervene skilfully to move their learning on. In other lessons, these pupils do not make the progress they should because the impact of the support they receive is not reviewed regularly enough.

The achievement of pupils

is inadequate

- Achievement at Key Stage 2 is inadequate. In 2013, the proportion of pupils attaining the expected level in reading, writing and mathematics was well below average; early data for 2014 shows it has fallen further and is very low. More pupils reached the expected level in reading, than in mathematics and writing and writing outcomes were very low. A very small number of pupils attained higher levels, particularly in writing and mathematics.
- The progress made by different groups of pupils in different years is highly variable and too often below that expected. This is particularly the case in writing and mathematics. In 2014, the proportion of pupils making expected progress was well below average in reading, writing and mathematics. Pupils who enter the school at other than normal entry times generally make expected and sometimes better than expected progress.
- From a range of starting points, children make expected, and sometimes better than expected, progress in the Reception Year and start Key Stage 1 attaining standards that are overall in line with those expected. However, fewer pupils than nationally start Key Stage 1 working above the expected levels.
- At the end of Year 1, the proportion of pupils reaching the expected standards in phonics is broadly average. Pupils make a good start to acquiring early literacy skills, but are not supported well enough to build on these as they move through the school.
- In the last academic year, pupils made broadly expected progress in Years 1 and 2 to reach standards in line with the national averages, although very few pupils reached above average levels of attainment in reading, writing or mathematics. This is because not enough made accelerated progress and the most able pupils were not challenged sufficiently.
- The school is at risk of not sustaining this level of outcomes in Key Stage 1. In some classes, pupils are not working at age related expectations, and the quality of teaching is not sufficiently strong to support accelerated progress, or to make sure that the more-able pupils, with the potential to attain standards higher than the levels expected, do so.

- Progress in mathematics is inadequate. Calculation skills are not secured as pupils move through the school. The school's assessment information shows that progress in most year groups is below that expected and pupils are not catching up. In particular the progress of disadvantaged pupils and those with special educational needs is below that expected. Across the school, girls make less progress in mathematics than boys because, as they grow older, they show less interest and are not sufficiently challenged.
- In 2013, disadvantaged pupils attained results that were about a year below those attained by their peers in school and by pupils nationally in mathematics. Their attainment in reading was broadly in line with other pupils in school and nationally. In writing they attained outcomes that were the same as other pupils in the school and very slightly above those of similar pupils nationally. The use of extra funding received for these pupils supports their developing confidence but does not make enough difference to their academic achievement.
- Pupils make inadequate progress in writing. They are not given enough opportunities to read or to write at length in literacy or other lessons. When they do write in other subjects they pay little attention to using the skills they are learning in literacy lessons such as spelling, grammar and punctuation.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs make variable progress. In 2014, too many pupils did not make the progress they should have done because the success of the extra support they were given is not measured carefully enough and as a result is not adapted quickly to match their learning needs.

The early years provision

requires improvement

- The teaching of key skills in reading, writing and mathematics by teachers and key staff in Reception is well planned. There are not, however, enough interesting resources and activities to enable children to use and improve their new skills in the wider classroom and outdoor environments. As a result, they spend too much time involved in tasks that are not challenging and which do not move their thinking and learning on.
- The Reception classes are well led and staff work as a collaborative team. A new procedure for analysing children's skills and abilities as they enter school has been implemented this term. Staff have just started to use this information to plan work that meets childrens' early learning needs more quickly than has been the case in previous years.
- Children who left the Early Years Foundation Stage in 2014 had developed skills and abilities that were overall broadly in line with those expected. Their literacy and mathematics skills were, however, less well developed and were below those typical for their age. Provision for children who are disabled or who have special educational needs is carefully considered and they are nurtured to grow in confidence and to rapidly become respected as individuals within their class community.

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	124716
Local authority	Suffolk
Inspection number	451726

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	294
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Dave Traher
Headteacher	Kathryn McMurtary
Date of previous school inspection	12-13 June 2013
Telephone number	01638 750342
Fax number	NA
Email address	office@stcprimary.suffolk

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