

St Andrew's Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School, Halstead

Mathews Close, Halstead, CO9 2BH

Inspection dates

14–15 January 2015

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Requires improvement	3
	This inspection:	Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Early years provision		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils**This is a good school.**

- The headteacher is an outstanding leader. Under her strong and highly effective leadership, the school has made significant progress since the previous inspection. The quality of teaching and pupils' progress have rapidly improved.
- Teaching is good. Some is outstanding. Teachers are quick to spot and encourage the potential of all their pupils.
- Teachers plan interesting lessons which meet the needs of all pupils, including those who find learning more difficult. Marking and assessment have greatly improved. Teachers have high expectations of their pupils' capabilities.
- All groups of pupils are now making good progress. They achieve well in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Pupils' skills and experiences are broadened and developed through a wide range of exciting activities. They love learning in the Forest School woodland classroom. Music and sport are particular strengths.
- Pupils have very positive attitudes to learning and to each other. They are proud of their school and take their responsibilities seriously. Behaviour in and around the school is good. The school is a caring community in which pupils feel safe, nurtured and valued.
- Children in the early years make good progress from their starting points and are well prepared to move into Year 1.
- Staff morale is very high. Staff particularly appreciate the well-targeted training and support provided. All who work in the school share the drive and determination of the headteacher to improve the school even more.
- Determined leadership at all levels has driven the rapid improvements. Governors know the school well and they successfully hold the school to account, providing a good balance of challenge and support.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Not all pupils are making rapid and sustained progress. Work provided for the most able sometimes lacks challenge.
- Teachers do not ensure that pupils regularly check their spelling mistakes.
- Subject leaders are relatively new to their roles and are at an early stage in developing them.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed 14 lessons, of which three were joint observations with the headteacher.
- The inspectors talked with two groups of pupils, as well as individual pupils during lessons and at playtimes, to find out their views about the school. The team undertook a scrutiny of pupils' English and mathematics books to establish the quality of pupils' work. They heard groups of pupils read.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, leaders, staff and several governors, including the Chair of the Governing Body. A further discussion was held by telephone with a representative from the local authority.
- The inspectors looked at a range of documents, including the school's plans for improvement, records of lesson observations, information on pupils' progress and the quality of writing in pupils' books. They also scrutinised records relating to behaviour, attendance and safeguarding. Inspectors looked at pupils' work on display throughout the school.
- The inspectors took account of the 59 responses to the online Parent View questionnaire. They checked information on the school's website, and took into consideration the 19 questionnaires completed by staff.

Inspection team

Susan Thomas-Pounce, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Bethan Owen

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This is a smaller than average-sized primary school.
- The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups or who speak English as an additional language is below average.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs supported through school action is about 18%, which is above the national average.
- The proportion of pupils eligible for the pupil premium is around 18%, which is below average. The pupil premium provides additional funding for disadvantaged pupils.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- Early Years provision in the Reception class is full time.
- Since the previous inspection, there have been significant staff changes in the school. The school was led for two terms by a temporary headteacher before the present headteacher took up post in September 2013.
- The headteacher is a Local Leader of Education (LLE) and has provided support to other local schools.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise the quality of teaching and its impact on pupils' achievement to outstanding, by ensuring that:
 - the most able pupils are provided with work that is always challenging
 - pupils regularly correct their spelling mistakes.
- Develop the skills of relatively new subject leaders in measuring pupils' progress and taking action to raise achievement in their area of responsibility.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are good

- The outstanding leadership of the experienced headteacher has been a key factor in improving the school. Under her vigorous leadership, the staff, governors and pupils have secured the rapid improvements in teaching and pupils' achievement over a relatively short period of time. The areas for improvement from the previous inspection have been decisively tackled.
- Leaders at all levels know what needs to improve, based upon rigorous checks on teaching and accurate information about pupils' progress. Staff training is closely linked to the school's development plan and focused on further improving pupils' achievement.
- The headteacher's checks on teachers' performance are thorough and astute. There are clear links between pupils' progress, teachers' performance targets and performance-related pay.
- Tracking of pupils' progress is well established and effective. The school promotes equality of opportunity well through checks made on the progress of individuals and groups of pupils and providing additional support or challenge, where needed. As a result, all groups of pupils now make good progress.
- New subject leaders are beginning to take on responsibility for checking on teaching and learning in their subject. The school is aware that their skills are not developed fully, and that they are not involved sufficiently in school self-evaluation.
- The successful focus of leaders on raising standards in literacy and mathematics has led to significant improvements in pupils' reading and writing skills. Work is now beginning on the next priorities, to ensure pupils' spelling improves, and to raise achievement for the most able.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted well so that pupils are well prepared for life in modern Britain. There are many opportunities for them to develop skills and confidence in a wide range of activities, including sports and music. The Forest School, together with imaginative and well-structured topics, provides opportunities for pupils to use literacy and numeracy skills across a range of subjects inside and outside the classroom. Pupils appreciate the wide range of visitors, visits and special activities that makes lessons exciting, promotes a love of learning and enables them to understand other faiths and cultures.
- The primary school sports funding is used to pay for specialist sports teaching. This has led to a sharp increase in pupils' interest and participation in sport. Following the opportunity to work with an Olympic slalom canoeist they are now inspired to take up the 'fitness improvers challenge'. More pupils are taking part in sports clubs, especially athletics.
- Effective use is made of pupil premium funding to support disadvantaged pupils. Any gaps between the achievement of disadvantaged pupils and others in the school are closing, particularly in reading and writing.
- The local authority supports and challenges the school effectively and now regards all aspects of the school to have improved and are good.
- Parents spoken with during the inspection and responses to Parent View overwhelmingly value and support the school. Parents and pupils recognise the improvements in the school.
- Safeguarding arrangements are thorough and meet statutory requirements.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governance is effective and has improved since the previous inspection. It provides rigorous and well-

informed challenge to school leaders. This has contributed effectively to the school's rapid improvement. Governors bring to the school a range of relevant skills and expertise that help them in holding the leadership to account for pupils' achievement.

- Governors know about the quality of teaching and how the school rewards good teaching and tackles any underperformance. This is based on a wide range of evidence, including analysis of national performance data and the school's own data, as well as through regular visits.
- Governors monitor closely the management of financial resources to ensure good value for money. For example, they have ensured that the previous deficit budget has been eliminated. They know how the additional funding for school sports and funding for disadvantaged pupils is being spent and check it is helping to raise participation and attainment.
- All safeguarding requirements are met; governors are committed to ensuring that pupils and staff are kept safe at school.

The behaviour and safety of pupils

are good

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. School records and the views of pupils, parents, staff and governors support this view. Pupils enjoy their learning and are enthusiastic about their work. They take a pride in their school and are sensible and orderly as they move around the corridors and playground, showing consideration for others.
- Sometimes, pupils need occasional reminders about expectations of their behaviour. When this occurs, they respond quickly to adults, so lessons continue to flow smoothly and progress is good.
- Pupils take on responsibility with pride. They take on a range of roles from the head boy and girl, house captains and play leaders; and this ensures that all pupils contribute positively to school life. Teachers and teaching assistants use the behaviour policy consistently well. Pupils say they value the rewards system.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. Pupils say they feel safe, and receive helpful information from teachers about how to keep safe. This view is endorsed by parents.
- Any form of bullying or exclusion from school is extremely rare. Pupils confidently report that any concerns they may have are promptly and sensitively dealt with by all adults in the school.
- Pupils have a good awareness of how to stay safe on the internet and how to deal with cyber-bullying when using new technology. They have a reasonable understanding of the different types of bullying and speak of the need to treat everyone in the community equally. Pupils' above-average attendance reflects their enjoyment of school.

The quality of teaching

is good

- High expectations by leaders and a good range of training have led to improvements in the quality of teaching. The impact has been that pupils' progress has accelerated, particularly in writing.
- The higher expectations of what pupils can achieve, including the quality and quantity of their work is confirmed by evidence of pupils' work in books, visits to classrooms, discussions with pupils and the school's own records of the quality of teaching over time.
- High quality marking and accurate assessment inform lesson planning and help teachers identify those pupils needing extra help. Pupils are given the opportunity to reflect on teachers' comments and to identify what they need to do to make better progress. This has brought about notable improvements in the accuracy and quality of pupils' work.
- Teachers' good understanding of what pupils know and can do ensures that they plan work that is generally matched well to pupils' varying needs and abilities. They use regular and accurate assessment to

ensure all pupils know how well they have done. Consequently, pupils are very clear about what they need to do to achieve success. The relationships between pupils and staff are warm and highly conducive to learning.

- Resources are carefully chosen to support and extend pupils' learning and this helps to motivate pupils and increase their commitment to learning. For example, whilst working on the epic poem Beowulf, pupils explored how authors develop characters and they discussed how they might make their writing exciting. The teacher's careful questions encouraged pupils to think about their learning and helped them ask good questions of each other. The activity captured the pupils' interests, particularly that of the boys.
- Well-organised guided reading sessions ensure there is a strong focus on reading for pleasure, research and comprehension skills. Achievement in reading has improved as a result and pupils are enthusiastic confident readers.
- The teaching of writing has improved. Pupils increasingly apply their writing skills across different subjects. This is contributing to improved achievement in writing. However, the focus on improving pupils' spelling has not yet had enough impact.
- Improved teaching in mathematics has resulted in consolidated gains in achievement; much higher proportions of pupils now make good progress in this subject.
- Teaching assistants support pupils well. They are well deployed by teachers and are given clear guidance about their roles and responsibilities.
- Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs are provided with work and support that is well adapted, so that they can make consistently good progress in their different classes.
- Although more able pupils are making good progress, they are not yet sufficiently well challenged in all classes or subjects. Nevertheless, an increasing number of pupils attained the higher levels in the National Curriculum tests and teacher assessments in 2014 than in the previous years.
- Homework is used effectively to support learning. Pupils show pride in their work in all subjects, confirming that they are finding lessons more enjoyable as a result of improved teaching since the previous inspection.

The achievement of pupils is good

- Pupils' work in their books and the school's current tracking data show that the school has successfully reversed a history of underachievement. Pupils' achievement has improved and is now securely good.
- Starting points are lower than usual. When pupils move into Year 1, many have caught up and developed skills which are typical for their age. Their good progress in the Reception Year sets them up well for the next stage of their learning. This is a considerable improvement on previous years and is the result of improvements in teaching.
- In Key Stage 1, previous underachievement has been successfully reversed, and pupils now make consistently good progress in reading, writing and mathematics. Pupils made significant gains in summer 2014. By the time they reach Year 2, pupils' attainment is now broadly average.
- Attainment has also risen to broadly average by the time pupils leave Year 6. There are notable improvements in writing. Because these pupils' attainment at the start of their time in Key Stage 1 was low, this represents good progress.
- Across the school, pupils are continuing to make good and improving progress in reading, writing and mathematics. Standards are rising and pupils in all year groups are building upon the improvements they made last year.

- Pupils read with confidence, fluency and with increased enjoyment, in school and at home, because the teaching of phonics (the sounds that letters make) has improved. Consequently, pupils are capable readers by the time they leave the school.
- Since the previous inspection, pupils' achievement in writing has strengthened and is now good, but not enough attention has been made in the past to encourage pupils to improve their spelling skills.
- Pupils make good progress in mathematics from their different starting points. They have a good understanding in all aspects of the subject.
- In 2014, the attainment of disadvantaged pupils in Year 6 in mathematics, grammar, punctuation and spelling was slightly ahead of other pupils in the school; and ahead of those nationally in mathematics. However, the attainment of disadvantaged pupils in reading and writing is more than one term behind their classmates and other pupils nationally. Even so, the gaps were smaller than in 2013 and these pupils made better progress than in previous years. Checks show that the gap is closing rapidly between disadvantaged pupils and their peers in the school and nationally.
- In 2014 the attainment of the school's most able pupils in Year 2 and Year 6 was higher than in previous years. More pupils gained the highest level in mathematics, bringing the school in line with those nationally. This represents a significant improvement in the past year and is a reflection of better teaching and well targeted support for pupils, but this is not consistent across the school. As a result, some of the most able pupils do not make rapid and sustained progress.
- Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs have improving rates of progress, in response to the introduction of systems to track their progress more effectively and adapt their provision and support quickly when needed. They now do as well as other pupils relative to their individual starting points.

The early years provision

is good

- There have been significant improvements to provision in the early years. This is because leadership has been strengthened as a result of the effective working partnership between the headteacher and early years leader. Improved assessments are making sure work is set at the right level of difficulty and teachers regularly check on children's progress.
- Children now make much better progress from their lower-than-usual starting points than was previously the case. The proportion of children reaching a good level of development is now in line with national expectations. As a result, children are well prepared to start Year 1.
- Children settle quickly, cooperate well and they care for each other. Behaviour is good as the children learn and play together. They are very safe because staff know them so well and take time to work with their parents to find out about their individual care needs.
- Teaching is good. Some is outstanding. Teachers' plans contain very clear information about the priorities for learning for each child. Teachers ensure that appropriate levels of support are offered as children practise reading, sounding out and writing new words. A good example of this was seen when children were reading out the recipe for making a gingerbread man. Staff used well-pitched questions and prompts to ensure that everyone could make a good contribution to the discussion.
- Children enjoy a wide range of well-planned activities. Teachers ensure that numbers and words are incorporated into play, and many children are able to talk confidently about what they are doing and learning...
- Children's books are frequently marked and detailed records kept of how well they are doing. This then informs how teachers support those who need extra help. Parents are particularly pleased with the new electronic learning journals, which enable them to check their children's work and progress more regularly, in addition to enabling them to share successes at home with the school.

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	115133
Local authority	Essex
Inspection number	442020

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

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	227
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mike Gee
Headteacher	Bridgette Gough
Date of previous school inspection	15 January 2013
Telephone number	01787 475699
Fax number	01787 478477
Email address	admin@st-andrews-halstead.essex.sch.uk

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