

St Margaret's Church of England VA Primary School, Bowers Gifford

London Road, Bowers Gifford, Basildon, SS13 2DU

Inspection dates

28–29 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 provides strong leadership. Together with the deputy headteacher and, more recently, the interim executive board, she has driven the school forward and improved teaching and achievement since the last inspection.
- Teaching is now good because leaders have used rigorous checks and training to raise the quality.
- Pupils' achievement is now good in English and mathematics. Teachers plan lessons in these subjects that take good account of pupils' different capabilities.
- Marking in English and mathematics is detailed and provides pupils with clear steps to improve their work.
- As a result of good teaching, children in the early years make good progress.
- Pupils have very positive attitudes to learning. They enjoy their lessons.
- Behaviour around the school is good. Pupils show respect and courtesy for one another. They are proud of their school.
- The school supports pupils from the Gypsy, Roma and Irish Traveller communities well.
- The school provides a safe environment for pupils. Pupils feel safe in school and know how to keep themselves safe.
- The school promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development exceptionally well. It is a harmonious community where the cultures of all pupils are respected and celebrated. As a result, pupils are well prepared for life in modern Britain.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Pupils do not make as much progress in writing as they do in reading and mathematics. When writing in subjects other than English, they are not given such clear guidance on how to improve.
- The work pupils are set in subjects other than English and mathematics is sometimes too easy or too hard.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors visited all classes to observe pupils' learning. Senior leaders joined inspectors for four of these observations. Inspectors also looked at work in pupils' books in lessons and conducted two work scrutinies, one jointly with the headteacher, in order to judge pupils' progress.
- A number of documents were examined, including the school's analysis of its own work and its improvement plans, information on pupils' academic progress and documents relating to behaviour, attendance and safeguarding.
- Inspectors talked to two groups of pupils and held informal discussions with pupils at both break and lunchtime. They listened to them read and observed a number of small-group sessions to see how pupils are supported with their learning.
- Discussions were held with the headteacher, members of the interim executive board, senior leaders, subject leaders and a representative of the local authority.
- The inspector took account of the 14 responses to the online questionnaire, Parent View, and the 58 responses to the school's own questionnaire. They also gathered parents' views at first hand at the start and end of the school day, and considered email communications from parents.
- The inspectors received and considered the views of the 32 staff who completed questionnaires.

Inspection team

Caroline Pardy, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Philip Scull

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- St Margaret's Church of England VA Primary School is smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- The early years comprises one Reception class, where children attend full time.
- The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups is above average. Just over half the pupils are White British, approximately 29% are African and approximately 10% are Gypsy Roma or of Irish Traveller heritage.
- Approximately 28% of the pupils speak English as an additional language. This is above average.
- Just over 11% of the pupils are disabled or have special educational needs. This is below average.
- Around 18% of the pupils are supported by the pupil premium (additional funding provided for disadvantaged pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals or in local authority care). This is below average.
- Since the last inspection, the local authority and diocese applied to the Department of Education to replace the governing body with an interim executive board (IEB). This was granted and the IEB took on the governance role in June 2014.
- The school is a member of the Basildon Excellence Panel. This group of schools provides support and training for its partner members.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectation for pupils' attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 6.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Further improve teaching in order to accelerate progress and raise attainment in writing by ensuring that:
 - work in all subjects is matched to pupils' different abilities
 - the marking of written work in all subjects gives pupils the same clear guidance that they get in English and mathematics.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher has made a positive impact on raising standards since the last inspection. She knows the strengths and weaknesses of the school and has accurately identified what needs to be done to further improve it. She has high expectations for all, and these are shared with both staff and pupils. As a result, achievement and behaviour have improved.
- The headteacher and deputy headteacher work well together and they have brought about a rapid improvement in the quality of teaching. They monitor teaching and learning rigorously using a range of information, and give teachers feedback on their strengths and areas for development. Teachers receive the training they need to improve their skills, and each has a partner in the school to support them in this. Teachers new to the school are supported by the deputy headteacher.
- The headteacher has tightened the way teaching is judged to include pupil progress. Staff pay rises and promotion depend on the impact of teaching on pupils' achievement.
- Leaders regularly and carefully monitor the progress of individual pupils and take swift action to support any who fall behind with their learning. This has been particularly effective in supporting reading.
- The senior leaders have strengthened the work of other leaders in monitoring the work of pupils in their subject or year groups. They identify who needs help with their learning and work with teachers to provide the support. They also monitor teaching, behaviour and marking in English, mathematics and religious education.
- The leadership of the early years is good. The many improvements to the learning environment since the last inspection have had a positive impact on children's achievement. The new leader has already identified clear priorities for improvement that are making a further contribution. For example, the introduction of guided reading is improving children's use of phonics (linking letters and sounds).
- The pupil premium is used to provide additional adults and part-time teachers to support literacy and numeracy for disadvantaged pupils in all classes. This is having a positive impact on improving the achievement of these pupils, especially in reading and mathematics.
- The sports premium funding is helping pupils to make healthy life choices. Specialist sports teachers lead lessons and support staff in teaching them. Pupils in Year 3 are taught to swim and any non-swimmers in Years 5 and 6 also have swimming lessons. Pupils talk enthusiastically about their sports lessons and all participate in them. The funding also provides opportunities for pupils to take part in competitions against other schools, such as the local swimming gala, football and netball tournaments.
- Pupils study a wide range of subjects which engage their interest in learning. The curriculum caters well for their spiritual, moral, social and cultural needs. Pupils are given the chance to reflect in a wide range of subjects, as well as in daily worship. They learn about different cultures as well as studying aspects of British history, art and music. Pupils are enthusiastic about the wide range of after-school and lunchtime clubs and the special subject days; for example, mathematics workshops, 'mad science' and a visit by professional magazine editors who worked with them to develop children's magazines.
- Leaders are committed to equality of opportunity for all. Pupils are taught to accept everyone for who they are and, as a result, racism is very rare. Pupils learn about a variety of faiths and to respect the beliefs and culture of others. A good example of this is seen in the support provided for pupils from Traveller communities. They are welcomed into the school and additional teaching in small groups ensures that they quickly settle into school life. Pupils learn that people from all cultures and faiths can live together harmoniously. Elections for school council representatives and form captains help pupils learn about democracy. As a result, pupils are well prepared for life in modern Britain.
- The school works in partnership with the Basildon Excellence Partnership and uses it, along with support from the local authority, to validate leaders' judgements and to provide training for teachers. The local

authority has confidence in the school's ability to improve with minimum support.

■ The governance of the school:

- The interim executive board (IEB) consists of three members with experience of governance in successful schools. It has only been in place for seven months, but during that time it has supported the headteacher to improve teaching. It has also taken action to improve the school's information and communication technology facilities and, as a result, pupils report that their lessons are now more stimulating and interesting.
- The IEB members know about the quality of teaching from visits and interviews carried out with staff. Pay awards are only agreed for teachers who meet their pupil achievement targets.
- The IEB understands the school's performance data and its members are aware of the impact of the pupil premium funding on the progress of disadvantaged pupils. They are aware of the progress of different groups of pupils. They are effective in holding senior, subject and other leaders to account by asking challenging questions about pupils' progress.
- The IEB has ensured that the school has the relevant policies to regulate pupils' safety and that leaders implement them in line with statutory requirements. The IEB members are suitably trained to undertake their safeguarding role.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. They are proud of their school and told inspectors how much they enjoyed being in school. Parents and staff agree that behaviour is good.
- Pupils play boisterously at break and lunchtime but consider the safety of others.
- In lessons, pupils have positive attitudes to learning. They are keen to participate in lessons and are eager to answer questions. They take pride in their work. However, when they find the work too easy or too hard, their attention can drift, although they usually refocus quickly on their work. Pupils told inspectors that lessons are rarely disrupted and that misbehaviour results in a sanction.
- Pupils appreciate the rewards system. They all told the inspectors about their recent trip to 'Party World' one evening after school because they had been well behaved all term. They told inspectors that the school council is involved in choosing the rewards.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. Almost all parents agree that the school keeps their child safe and well looked after. Pupils say they feel safe because people cannot get into the school and all adults look after them and are easy to talk to. They also told inspectors that the school made them aware of the dangers of cyber-bullying and the importance of being safe when using the internet.
- Pupils told inspectors that bullying and racism are very rare as the school teaches them to respect everyone. They understand the difference between bullying and falling out, and explained that adults help them to repair their relationships when they fall out with friends.
- The school ensures that pupils who are from Traveller families have a place in the school on their return to the area, so they are safe and quickly return to learning. This has an impact on the attendance rate, however, making it below average for the whole school. The attendance of pupils from non-Traveller families is above average.

The quality of teaching is good

- The quality of teaching is good throughout the school. As a result, pupils make good progress, especially in mathematics and reading, and attainment has risen since the last inspection.
- Teachers know their pupils well; they use progress data to plan interesting activities that match the different stages of learning in their class. Pupils told inspectors that they enjoy lessons because teachers 'make learning fun'.
- The school organises pupils into ability bands in Years 5 and 6 for mathematics and English. This ensures that pupils get the appropriate support and that activities in these subjects provide the pupils with the right level of challenge. However, in other subjects, such as science and topic work, not all activities allowed pupils to develop their knowledge and writing skills in sufficient depth. This limited the progress of some pupils.
- Additional adults work well with different groups of pupils. They are trained well and have good subject knowledge. Teachers' planning clearly indicates how extra staff are to be used to support learning and this contributes to the good progress pupils make.
- Reading is taught well, especially phonics skills. Pupils who read to the inspectors were able to use their phonics skills to decode unfamiliar words. Most pupils read fluently and with expression.
- Staff show high expectations of pupils' work rate, and inspectors saw a good volume of work in most subjects, especially in mathematics and English. Teachers expect pupils to always produce their best work and they respond accordingly. Most of the work in pupils' books is well presented, showing the pride that pupils take in their work.
- Marking is a notable strength of the teaching in English and mathematics. All teachers set out for pupils very clear steps explaining how they can improve their work. Pupils are then given time to improve their work. Pupils told inspectors that all teachers' made sure they respond to their marking.
- Marking is not quite so effective in other subjects because teachers are not as rigorous in these subjects in identifying how writing can be improved.

The achievement of pupils is good

- Children start in the Reception Year with levels of development below those typical for their age, especially in mathematics, literacy, speech and language. A large number of pupils have not attended a nursery prior to joining the school. As a result of good teaching, the proportion reaching a good level of development rose in 2014 and was above average.
- The proportion of pupils meeting the expected standard in the national phonics screening check at the end of Year 1 has been well above average for the last two years.
- Attainment at the end of Key Stage 1 improved sharply in 2014. The proportion of pupils reaching the expected level in reading was average, but it was above average in mathematics and writing. The proportion meeting the higher levels of attainment was in line with that seen nationally overall, and above in writing. This represents a marked improvement from 2013, when the proportion reaching the higher levels was well below average.
- At the end of Key Stage 2 in 2014, the proportions of pupils reaching expected and higher levels in reading, writing and mathematics improved and were broadly average. Spelling, punctuation and grammar are taught well, and attainment in this area was above average.
- School data and work in books show that the most-able pupils do well. Leaders have identified that

grouping pupils by ability in Years 5 and 6 makes it easier to give teachers the opportunity to fully challenge them in English and mathematics.

- In 2014, the attainment gap between disadvantaged pupils in Year 6 and other pupils nationally reduced to approximately eight months in reading and mathematics, and approximately ten months in writing. Disadvantaged pupils were approximately four months behind other pupils in the school in reading and mathematics, and eight months behind in writing. The gap compared to both other pupils nationally and others in the school has halved in all subjects in the last year. School data shows the gap is continuing to narrow, as disadvantaged pupils are helped to make good progress throughout the school.
- The individual learning needs of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs are correctly identified and appropriate support is provided for them. As a result, these pupils are making the same good progress as other pupils. Pupils from minority ethnic groups also achieve well, including those learning English as an additional language. The achievement of pupils from Traveller families who attend the school regularly is similarly in line with their peers.

The early years provision is good

- The early years provision is well led. There have been many improvements since the last inspection and, as a result, the proportion of children reaching a good level of development by the end of the Reception Year has risen to above average. Children make good progress and are well prepared for Year 1.
- Teaching is good. Children enjoy a range of interesting and stimulating activities. For example, children were very excited about mixing paint and glue for their creative project, and when investigating a closed golden box to guess what might be inside.
- Staff use the results of their ongoing assessments to plan activities at the right level of difficulty for individual children. All adults ask questions skilfully to check and reinforce understanding and to extend children's vocabulary. Good use is made of the outside area to link activities to whichever topic is the current focus of teaching.
- Teaching assistants are effective in supporting the learning of children who are disabled or have special educational needs. Children who speak English as an additional language are also well supported. As a result, both groups make good progress.
- Behaviour is good because children enjoy the activities and respond well to expectations and routines. Relationships between adults and children are positive. It is a safe environment. Children are taught how to work safely, and they do.
- Children, and their parents, are supported well before starting in Reception. Parents are kept informed about the progress of their child when they come into class every week to look through their child's 'learning journal', which records each day's activities.

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	115150
Local authority	Essex
Inspection number	454772

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	214
Appropriate authority	Interim executive board
Chair	Mike Simmonds
Headteacher	Emma Wigmore
Date of previous school inspection	30 April 2013
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