

# Epping St John's Church of England VC School

Bury Lane, Epping, CM16 5JB

**Inspection dates** 24–25 June 2015

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	<b>Requires improvement</b>	<b>3</b>
Leadership and management		Requires improvement	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement	3
Achievement of pupils		Requires improvement	3

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a school that requires improvement.

- Students do not make as much progress as students do on average nationally, particularly in mathematics.
- The gap between the attainment of disadvantaged students and other students is too large.
- Over time, disabled students and those who have special educational needs have not achieved as well as they should.
- Teachers do not routinely plan work which meets the needs of all the learners in their classes, particularly the least- and most-able students.
- Teachers do not always demand high enough standards of presentation or use homework effectively to enhance learning.
- Teachers do not all apply the school's behaviour policy consistently during lessons. Students' behaviour and attitudes to their learning are not consistently good. There is too much low level disruption in lessons.
- Fixed-term exclusions are too high.
- School leaders' evaluation of the quality of teaching has been too optimistic, and this has impeded the school's ability to bring about necessary improvements in teaching and achievement.
- Governance is not as effective as it should be, because governors have not held school leaders to account for the decline in student progress since the last inspection.

### The school has the following strengths

- Students and staff are proud of their new school buildings and look after them very well.
- The school's work to keep students safe and secure is good. Students are well cared for and benefit from effective advice and guidance.
- The school's promotion of students' social, moral, spiritual and cultural development is highly positive.
- Students experience strong teaching in a number of subjects, including modern foreign languages and humanities.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching and learning in 40 lessons. Six of these were observed jointly with a member of the school's senior leadership team. School assemblies were also observed.
- Inspectors observed students' behaviour at breaks, lunchtimes and before school.
- Inspectors took account of the 57 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire (Parent View), and also reviewed the responses to Ofsted's inspection questionnaire from 31 members of staff.
- Inspectors scrutinised the school's current assessment data, the school development plan, students' work, minutes of meetings and policies, safeguarding documentation and the school's self-evaluation summary.
- Inspectors met with senior and middle leaders, teachers, students, governors and a representative from the local authority. A telephone discussion was undertaken with a representative from the diocese.

## Inspection team

Paul Lawrence, Lead inspector	Seconded Inspector
Richard Spencer	Seconded Inspector
David Gutmann	Additional Inspector
Helen Booth	Additional Inspector

*Paul Lawrence and Richard Spencer are appointed as Additional Inspectors, under the powers relating to additional inspectors, in paragraph 11 of Part 2 of Schedule 12 to the Education and Inspections Act 2006.*

## Full report

### Information about this school

- Epping St John's Church of England VC School is smaller than the average-sized secondary school.
- Most students come from White British backgrounds.
- The proportion of students known to be eligible for the pupil premium is average. The pupil premium provides additional funding for looked-after children and students known to be eligible for free school meals.
- The proportion of disabled students and those who have special educational needs is broadly average.
- The school currently uses alternative provision to educate a small proportion of its Key Stage 4 students at 'The Box', Epping.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress at Key Stage 4.
- Over the last year the school has received support from Davenant Foundation School, whose headteacher is a National Leader of Education (NLE).
- The school plans to open a sixth-form in September 2015 as part of a local consortium.

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

- Improve teaching in the school to good or better by ensuring all teachers:
  - plan work which meets the needs of all the learners in their classes, particularly those who are the least and most able
  - insist upon high standards of presentation in all students' work
  - set homework which effectively builds upon or consolidates what students have learnt in lessons
  - apply the school behaviour policy consistently in their classes.
- Improve achievement in the school by:
  - accelerating progress in mathematics so that it is in line with or above national expectations
  - eliminating gaps between the attainment of disadvantaged students and other students.
- Improve leadership in the school by:
  - ensuring school leaders evaluate the quality of teaching more accurately by drawing upon all available evidence about the impact of teaching, including progress data
  - more effectively supporting the achievement of disabled students and those who have special educational needs
  - ensuring governors have a clear understanding of school progress data so they can effectively hold school leaders to account.
- Improve behaviour in the school so that students' attitudes to their learning are improved and they work hard at all times, low level disruption is eliminated from lessons and the numbers of fixed-term exclusions are reduced to be in line with or below national averages.

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 requires improvement

- School leaders and governors have not responded quickly enough to available evidence about weaknesses in students' progress at the school since the last inspection. They have concentrated too much on monitoring overall levels of attainment, particularly the proportion of students who achieve five A\* to C GCSE grades, including English and mathematics. Since this measure fell sharply in 2014 leaders have taken rapid action to accelerate students' progress.
- During this academic year there have been significant changes in middle and senior leadership and a number of teachers have left; most have been successfully replaced. This has strengthened teaching and leadership, but there has not been enough time for these changes to have the necessary impact upon outcomes.
- Senior leaders' judgement of the school's overall effectiveness has been too optimistic. The school's evaluation of the quality of teaching in particular has been over-generous. It has not taken account of all the evidence available about the impact of teaching over time, such as achievement data and the work in students' books. This has impeded the school's ability to improve teaching.
- Pupil premium funding has not been used effectively as gaps between the attainment of disadvantaged students and others are too wide. Strategies initiated this year have begun to have an impact, particularly in Key Stage 3; school leaders are not yet clear which aspects of this provision are having most impact.
- Senior leadership has not been effectively coordinated to make the greatest possible impact on teaching and learning. A recent review and subsequent reorganisation has ensured there is now a greater shared understanding of roles and responsibilities. This has enabled senior leaders to hold leaders in charge of subjects to account for the performance of students in their areas.
- A new computer package has given leaders in charge of subjects much easier access to information about student performance. This has enabled them to monitor the progress of individuals and groups of students, which has improved their effectiveness.
- School leaders have successfully created a caring and supportive school ethos in which all members of the school community feel safe and valued. The school's arrangements for safeguarding students meet statutory requirements and are highly effective.
- Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted effectively through the school's day-to-day activities, assemblies and through planned work in tutorial time and lessons. All students in Key Stage 4 take a full or short-course GCSE in religious education and this helps prepare them for life in modern Britain, because they are taught about different cultures and religions and are encouraged to reflect upon important ethical issues. This also strengthens the school's positive work to promote equality and tackle discrimination.
- The school provides students with a suitably broad range of learning opportunities, with a sound balance of academic and vocational courses. Students value the range of after-school clubs and sporting activities available.
- The school arranges alternative placements for students who leaders believe would benefit from a different curriculum experience than can be provided on the school site. School leaders regularly and effectively monitor the attendance, behaviour and progress of these students.
- The local authority has engaged constructively with the school and arranged for leaders and teachers to be supported by effective practitioners from other schools, particularly in order to confirm that teachers' assessments of the standard of student's work this year have been accurate. The local authority has also undertaken reviews of senior leadership and governance.

- The information, advice and career's guidance provided by the school are highly effective. In recent years every student has left Year 11 with a destination arranged for the next stage of their education or employment.
- **The governance of the school:**
  - Governors have not effectively held school leaders to account because they have too readily accepted school leaders' over-optimistic self-evaluation, particularly in regard to achievement. They have not sufficiently understood the importance of progress data in analysing the school's performance and comparing it with that of other schools.
  - Appropriate procedures are in place for monitoring the performance management of staff, and to ensure that good teaching is rewarded and underperformance tackled. However, the effectiveness of these systems has been limited by the accuracy of the school's own judgements about the quality of teaching.
  - Governors have undertaken their statutory duty with regard to safeguarding effectively. Governors have played an important part in establishing and maintaining the caring and supportive ethos of the school and in ensuring the strong spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of students which prepares students for life in modern Britain.
  - A recent external review of governance has resulted in the reorganisation of the governing body so that responsibilities and roles are more clearly defined. A new Chair has also recently been appointed. These changes have greatly enhanced the potential of the governing body to play an effective and strategic role in raising standards.

## The behaviour and safety of pupils

## requires improvement

### Behaviour

- The behaviour of students requires improvement. This is because many do not consistently show positive attitudes to their learning. They do not routinely take the opportunity to work as hard as they should.
- Teachers do not always apply the school's behaviour policy consistently. As a result, sometimes a minority of students hinder the learning of others because they get away with low-level disruption.
- Fixed-term exclusions are above the national average.
- The recent move to the new purpose-built school building has contributed to an improvement in the conduct of students around the school site. Students take obvious pride in their surroundings and look after their environment well, leaving little litter. Their movement around the building is calm and orderly, and they are usually polite and courteous. Students look smart and wear their uniforms well.
- The school has worked very successfully to improve attendance. Levels of absence have declined rapidly this year and are now in line with the national average.

### Safety

- The school's work to keep students safe and secure is good. Students believe that they are safe and well cared for and are confident about raising any concerns with teachers and other adults. Parents who responded to the online questionnaire believe that students are safe and well cared for at school.
- Bullying is rare and is effectively tackled by the school when it does arise. Racist or homophobic language is not tolerated. Students are taught effectively about the risks associated with computers and mobile phones.
- The school takes its responsibilities for safeguarding students very seriously. The new site is very secure, access is carefully controlled and all visitors appropriately monitored.

**The quality of teaching** requires improvement

- The quality of teaching in the school has not been of a sufficiently high standard over time to ensure that all students make the progress they should.
- Teachers do not routinely plan work for lessons to meet the needs of all the learners in their classes. They too often set the same work for all the students without ensuring that it is readily accessible to the least able and that it incorporates enough challenge for the most able. When the most-able students are provided with extension tasks they are too often additional exercises at the same level.
- Teachers do not consistently have high enough expectations of what students can achieve in lessons. They too often accept poorly presented work. This means that students are not able to maintain a clear written record of their learning, which hinders future revision.
- Teachers are not consistent in how they apply school policies about sanctions and rewards within the classroom. As a result, students do not develop consistently constructive learning behaviours over time.
- Teachers do not always plan homework which effectively builds upon or consolidates what students have learned in lessons.
- The teaching of literacy across the curriculum is improving. Students are encouraged to read in tutor time and through activities in individual subject areas. Students are producing increasingly effective extended writing across the curriculum, for example in humanities lessons.
- Students experience effective teaching in a range of subjects. Teaching in modern foreign languages is strong, and students make good progress as a result. In humanities, teachers have high expectations that students will explain their conclusions thoroughly and with relevant detail.
- The quality of teaching in English is improving rapidly. Teaching in mathematics and science is also starting to improve, but not as quickly, largely because of frequent changes in staffing and difficulties in recruitment.
- Teachers' marking is improving. Written feedback is becoming more regular and thorough, and contains an increasing amount of subject-specific advice about what students need to do to improve.

**The achievement of pupils** requires improvement

- Students do not make as much progress overall as they should. This is reflected in students' performance in a range of subject areas.
- Standards in mathematics are not high enough. In each of the last three years, students have made considerably less progress than students have done on average nationally.
- There are substantial gaps between the attainment of students for whom the school receives pupil premium funding, and the attainment of both other students in the school and other students nationally. In 2014, the gap between these disadvantaged students and other students in the school amounted to one grade in English and mathematics, and the gap between disadvantaged students at the school and other students nationally was over one grade in English and almost two in grades in mathematics. The school's interventions for disadvantaged students have started to have an impact in accelerating their progress in Key Stage 3, but gaps are not predicted to narrow in Key Stage 4 outcomes in 2015.
- Since the last inspection the proportion of students who achieved five A\* to C GCSE grades, including English and mathematics, rose year on year until 2014 when there was a notable drop in this attainment measure. The school's own data suggests that it will rise again in 2015. Enhanced programmes of revision and support organised for these students, together with improved systems for moderating the assessment

of their work, are evidence supporting this prediction of improved attainment.

- Disabled students and those who have special educational needs have not achieved as well as they should. The school has focused this year on improving provision for these students and this is starting to have an impact on the progress students are making, particularly in Key Stage 3.
- The achievement of the most-able students is in line with that of other ability groups within the school, but they do not make as much progress as similar students do on average nationally.
- The school does not enter students early for GCSE in any subject.
- Students in alternative placements away from the school site follow appropriate courses on which they achieve well. This enables them to move successfully to the next stage of their education or employment.
- Students achieve well in a number of subject areas. They make strong progress, and attain well, in modern foreign languages, engineering, history and religious education. Evidence from this inspection suggests that progress in English is accelerating and evidence provided by the school suggests that, in 2015, GCSE outcomes will be in line with national averages.

## 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>	115236
<b>Local authority</b>	Essex
<b>Inspection number</b>	461669

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Secondary
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary controlled
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–16
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	764
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Ben Murphy
<b>Headteacher</b>	George Yerosimou
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	7 February 2012
<b>Telephone number</b>	01992 573028
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