

Southminster Church of England Primary School

Burnham Road, Southminster, CM0 7ES

Inspection dates 8–9 July 2015

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected as an academy
	This inspection:	Requires improvement 3
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
Early years provision	Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement. It is not good because

- Pupils' achievement, although improving, has not been consistently good over time in reading, writing and mathematics across the school.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs, do not always make as much progress or achieve as well as they should. Neither do some of the most-able pupils.
- Teaching is not yet consistently good in all year groups. Tasks are not always set at the right level of difficulty to ensure that all groups of pupils, including the most able, make good progress.
- On some occasions, the disruptive behaviour of a small minority of pupils, with particular social and emotional difficulties, hinders their own and other pupils' progress. Some teachers are not sufficiently skilful in managing the behaviour of these pupils.
- Teachers' marking is not always informative enough to help pupils to improve their work and pupils do not consistently act on the advice teachers give them.
- Middle leaders are not yet fully involved in the drive to improve teaching and raise standards.

The school has the following strengths

- The school has improved steadily over the past year. Pupils are making faster progress this year than previously and their attainment is rising.
- Senior leaders and governors have now an accurate view of the quality of teaching and achievement and are working closely together to move the school forward.
- Pupils are kept safe at school. They learn how to keep themselves and others safe.
- Teaching in the early years is good. This is helping the children to make rapid progress from starting points that are below the level typically found when children begin school.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted effectively. Pupils learn to value others' beliefs and ways of life and are prepared well for life in modern Britain.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed 12 lessons, two of which were seen jointly with the headteacher. They made a number of short visits to lessons and observed small groups of pupils taught by teachers and teaching assistants. The inspectors also listened to pupils in Years 2 and 6 reading.
- Inspectors held meetings with groups of pupils, members of staff, and with the Chairperson of the Multi Academy Trust and three governors of the Local Governing Body. A meeting was also held with a representative of the local authority.
- The inspectors took account of 65 responses to the Ofsted online questionnaire (Parent View). They talked to parents in the morning when they accompanied their children to school. Inspectors considered 19 responses to the staff questionnaire.
- The inspectors looked at pupils' books and at a number of documents, including: the school's own data on pupils' current attainment and progress as well as the 2015 results; the school's evaluation of its performance; school improvement planning; documentation relating to teachers' performance over time; and records relating to safeguarding.

Inspection team

Tusha Chakraborti, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Rosemary McCarthy

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school converted to become an academy school on 1 November 2013. When its predecessor school of the same name was last inspected by Ofsted, it was judged to require special measures.
- The school is smaller than the average-sized primary school. Children in the early years are taught full-time in the Reception class.
- Most pupils come from White British backgrounds.
- The proportion of pupils who are eligible for the pupil premium, which provides additional funding for disadvantaged pupils in the care of the local authority and for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals, is average.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is broadly average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 6.
- There have been significant changes in staffing in recent years; the deputy headteacher and the early years leader have joined the school in September 2014.
- More pupils than in most schools join or leave the school part way through the school year. For example, of the 25 pupils in the current Year 6, five joined the school in Years 3 to 4 and two in Year 6.
- The school operates under the Diocese of Chelmsford Vine Schools Trust and works closely with other schools within the Trust. The Trust Board, known as 'Multi-academy Trust' oversees the school's work in collaboration with the school's governing body, called the 'Local Governing Body'.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching and pupils' progress so that they are at least good in all classes to improve achievement in reading, writing and mathematics by ensuring:
 - the tasks teachers set in lessons always build on what pupils can already do and are sufficiently demanding for all groups of pupils, including the most able
 - teachers provide all pupils with clear guidance on how they should improve their learning, and encourage pupils to act on the advice they are given in teachers' marking and other comments
 - all teachers receive training in how to manage the behaviour of pupils disrupting learning.
- Improve leadership and management by:
 - enhancing the support for disabled pupils, those who have special educational needs and the most able
 - strengthening the capacity of middle leaders to check teaching and learning in their areas effectively.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management requires improvement

- Although there is evidence of improvements in the current academic year, leaders and governors have not been rigorous enough in the past to improve the quality of teaching and to eliminate underachievement. Leaders have not ensured that behaviour is consistently good across the school or acted to eliminate the disruptive behaviour of a small minority group of pupils in lessons. However, leaders and governors have taken decisive and positive action to improve teaching and pupils' achievement. Consequently, pupils have made accelerated progress this year and their attainment is rising in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Changes in the leadership team have meant that middle leaders have not yet had sufficient time in their roles to drive the improvement in teaching and raise standards. Middle leadership has improved since the appointment of the deputy headteacher and the early year's leader, but is not yet strong enough to ensure good progress across the school in all subjects.
- A number of parents who responded to the questionnaire and spoke to the inspectors during the inspection expressed concerns about pupils' behaviour. They believe that the school does not communicate with them well enough or provide them with information about their children's progress and other aspects of the schools' work. The inspectors found that school informs parents regularly through texts and newsletters and in parents meetings. Furthermore, the school has already responded to this issue by providing workshops for parents to ensure that they are more involved in their children's learning.
- The headteacher and the deputy headteacher, supported by other leaders, have a clear view of the school's performance and know what is needed to improve it. The quality of teaching is now carefully checked by the headteacher, the school improvement advisers from the local authority and the trust. The leaders are fostering an increasingly positive climate for learning and are promoting better relationships between adults and pupils.
- The school has introduced a more rigorous system for managing the performance of teachers. Leaders ensure the targets they set teachers and training programme link well to pupils' progress and school improvement priorities. They hold teachers responsible for their pupils' achievement.
- The new curriculum is planned well and gives pupils good opportunities to enhance their learning and skills through additional activities, events and visits. The school promotes pupils' understanding of democracy through the work of the school council. Pupils understand the importance of a fair voting system and of their democratic rights for example, to select a member of their school council. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted well. The school uses its well-planned programme of assemblies to help pupils to understand the beliefs of other religions and cultures that are different to their own. In this way, it ensures they learn about the key values that underpin the British way of life and this prepares them well for life in British society.
- The school has used the primary school sport premium well to deploy specialist teachers to train the staff so that their own skills in teaching sport can improve. As a result, an increasing number of pupils now participate in sports clubs.
- Leaders ensure that all safeguarding and child protection policies and practices are effective and meet current requirements.
- The school is using the pupil premium funding well to provide effective intervention programmes for the disadvantaged pupils. As a result, these pupils are making faster progress.
- The school is committed to equal opportunities for all its pupils. It focuses on raising the achievement of all groups and quickly tackles any discrimination. Leaders are aware that further improvement in pupils' achievement is essential to prepare them well for their next stage in education.

- The Multi-academy Trust worked closely with the local authority to provide a systematic and effective programme for monitoring the quality of teaching and learning and for appropriate training for staff. The impact of its support is reflected in the improvement in teaching now being seen across the school. The leaders work effectively with other external agencies and the other schools within the trust to extend the expertise of staff.

■ The governance of the school:

- Concerted and successful action taken by the Multi-academy Trust and Local Governing Body is moving the school forward, bringing a stronger sense of purpose and accountability. The training they have had has ensured that governors have a thorough understanding of pupils' achievement and know how the school's results compare with other schools nationally. The Chairperson of the Trust has ensured the appointment of experienced leaders to strengthen the leadership team. This is having a positive impact on teaching and learning. Governors are increasingly well informed about the quality of teaching and pupils' performance through their own monitoring visits and reports from the headteacher. They support the headteacher and staff and hold them to account for the standards in the school.
- Governors appraise the headteacher's performance against agreed targets and check that the staff performance is monitored properly. They ensure that teachers receive financial award only if their pupils reach their achievement targets. Governors know how funding is used, including the pupil premium and sports funding, and make sure that all funding has the impact intended, particularly in raising the achievement of disadvantaged pupils. They ensure that the procedures for safeguarding pupils meet the national requirement.

The behaviour and safety of pupils

requires improvement

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement. This is because a small minority of pupils with considerable social and emotional difficulties display poor attitudes to learning and present challenging behaviour that disrupts the learning of other pupils in some classes. Several pupils expressed their concern about this and explained that they are unable to learn on these occasions.
- There are clear procedures to help adults to manage pupils' behaviour. These are often applied effectively. However, not all teachers are skilful enough to deal with challenging behaviour of a small minority of pupils. Many parents responding to the on-line survey and speaking to the inspectors during the inspection expressed concerns about pupils' behaviour.
- The majority of pupils have positive attitudes to learning, listen attentively to teachers and respond immediately to instructions. They respond well to the school rules and pupils consider them fair. Most pupils are proud of their school and thrive in the school's inclusive atmosphere where their views are valued.
- Pupils are keen to take on responsibilities. Members of the school council organise fundraising activities for national and international charities.
- Attendance has improved and is now in line with the national average. This is because the leaders, supported well by the school's well-being co-ordinator, have worked effectively with external agencies and parents to raise attendance.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. As a result, most pupils say they feel safe in school and that teachers care for them. The majority of parents who responded to the questionnaire and spoke to the inspectors agree.
- Pupils have a good understanding of how to stay safe, including when using the internet or on the road, and in case of fire. They know what to do if they should encounter such problems. They understand how to keep themselves and others safe.
- Pupils show a good understanding of different forms of bullying, including name-calling, racism and

cyber-bullying. Most pupils say that there is very little bullying in the school and that, in most cases, it is dealt with quickly and fairly.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- Teaching is not yet consistently good in all year groups and subjects. However, it is improving as a result of more rigorous monitoring of teaching by leaders, by their use of effective performance management and their good support for staff. As a result pupils are now making faster progress in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Teachers do not always have high enough expectations of how much progress pupils can make in lessons. Work is not consistently well matched to the learning needs of all groups of pupils and teachers do not always demand enough of pupils so they learn and move on quickly. As a result, pupils do not always achieve as well as they could.
- The most-able pupils are sometimes set extension work but these additional tasks do not always stretch them sufficiently to deepen their knowledge and understanding in all subjects. As a result, these pupils do not reach the standards of which they are capable.
- Marking is regular, but the comments teachers write on pupils' work are not consistently clear enough to help them to improve it in line with the school's policy. Teachers do not always ensure that pupils act on the advice they get in teachers' comments.
- Teachers generally ensure there is a positive climate for learning. In most lessons, with increasingly fewer exceptions, the majority of pupils respond readily to tasks, showing interest and enthusiasm.
- Where teaching is good pupils make faster progress. In the best teaching, teachers use searching questioning to extend their knowledge and understanding. Teachers have good subject knowledge and build on what they already know. For example, in a literacy lesson in Year 6, the teacher used demanding questioning to make sure that pupils understood the key features and the appropriate use of language to improve their creative writing.
- The support for disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is improving in the current year. In most lessons, the teaching assistants support these pupils effectively through appropriate intervention programmes. However, these improvements have not been in place long enough to improve the progress of some pupils.
- The teaching of phonics (the sounds that letters make) is effective. Teachers use a consistent method so that pupils can build on what they are learning from week to week. This has led to an improvement in pupils' reading skills over the past year, especially in Year 6.
- Teachers encourage good reading habits across the school. They help pupils to read a range of books by different authors during reading sessions in school and at home. This also supports pupils' writing skills well. In mathematics, pupils are increasingly improving their calculation and solving problems skills.

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Pupils' achievement is not consistently good; progress has been too slow in the past, leaving pupils with too much ground to make up. Attainment was well below the national average at the end of Year 6 in reading, writing and mathematics in 2014. Leaders and governors have taken decisive action to improve the quality of teaching and learning across the whole school by implementing a rigorous monitoring and support system in all areas. As a result, the attainment of the pupils currently in the school is rising and their progress is improving. However, pupils still have much to do before they reach above average standards by the time they leave the school.

- The national test results for reading, writing and mathematics in 2015 show that pupils are now making faster progress, particularly in writing and mathematics. Pupils' attainment is broadly average in all three subjects in comparison to the 2014 national results.
- The achievement of the most-able pupils is not yet good. The most-able pupils in Year 6 are now making accelerated progress, given their starting points and more pupils exceeded expected progress in all subjects in 2015 than in 2014. However, this is not consistently the case in other years.
- Pupils' attainment by the end of Year 2 is broadly average, and increasing numbers of pupils in Key Stage 1 are making expected progress in reading, writing and mathematics. The results of the phonics screening check for 2015 were in line with the latest national average.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs, including those with specific social and emotional needs, are now making faster progress from their starting points. This is because they now receive better-organised support in all year groups than was previously the case. However, like other groups of pupils in the school, their achievement continues to require improvement.
- The achievement of disadvantaged pupils, who are eligible for additional government funding, has improved over the past two years. The school has employed a range of effective interventions help pupils on an individual basis. Consequently, most of these pupils are making better progress in reading, writing and mathematics than previously, and this is narrowing the gap in attainment between themselves and their classmates. In 2014, these pupils were approximately three terms behind their classmates in school in reading, writing and mathematics. Nationally, they were approximately four terms behind in all three subjects. The gaps have narrowed in the current year. Results for 2015 show that disadvantaged pupils were now just two terms behind their classmates in reading, writing and mathematics.

The early years provision

is good

- The early year's provision is a real strength of the school due to the strong and effective leadership from the early year's leader. Supported by other staff, she ensures that children learn and play together in a safe and nurturing environment. This helps children to make a good start in school and contributes well to their learning and well-being.
- Children start in Reception with skills that are below those typical for their age, especially in communication and language development. They make consistently good progress in Reception. The proportion of children who achieve a good level of development by the end of Reception is above the national average. They are well prepared for their entry into Key Stage 1.
- Teaching is good and sometimes outstanding. Teachers' careful planning and assessment help children, including disabled children, those who have special educational needs and the most-able children, to make rapid progress. Teachers plan a range of stimulating activities that capture children's imagination and engage their interests. Children are encouraged to become confident in pursuing indoor and outdoor activities that match their own interests as well as those directed by adults. Adults keep a close check on how children are doing and use this information to plan the next steps of their learning.
- Regular teaching of phonics helps children to develop their reading skills rapidly. The children enjoy browsing through books and most can explain what is happening in the pictures to tell the story.
- Children's behaviour is good. They settle quickly into their daily routines and form excellent relationships with adults and each other. They are polite to adults and work well together. Staff create a caring and positive environment where children feel safe and secure. This ensures they are well prepared for their education in Key Stage 1.
- Staff work with the parents effectively to involve them in their children's learning. For example, the 'Magic Monday' sessions every half term enables parents to share and contribute to their children's learning journals. The 'home-school link' programme also helps parents well to support their children's reading skills at home.

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	140180
Local authority	Essex
Inspection number	450115

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	190
Appropriate authority	Diocese of Chelmsford Vine Schools Trust
Chairperson	Jeff Graham
Headteacher	Karen Harden
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
Telephone number	01621 772409
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