

St George's New Town Junior School

Canterbury Road, Colchester CO2 7RU

Inspection dates

7–8 December 2015

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

Effectiveness of leadership and management	Requires improvement
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Requires improvement
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Requires improvement
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- Pupils' attainment in 2015 was below the national average at the end of Key Stage 2 in reading. Attainment in writing has remained significantly below the national average for the last three years.
- The proportion of pupils currently making more than expected progress in reading and writing across the school is not high enough.
- The quality of teaching is not consistently good. Not all teachers have high enough expectations of what pupils can do, particularly the least-able pupils.
- There is inconsistency in how well teachers use assessment information to identify next steps in pupils' learning, particularly in writing. As a result, pupils do not always know what they need to do to improve their written work.
- Leaders do not use assessment information from Key Stage 1 well enough. Consequently, planning for pupils' future learning to ensure that they make at least expected progress from their various starting points is not as effective as it should be.
- The headteacher and senior leaders do not routinely monitor the quality of teaching. As a consequence, they have been too slow in addressing the underachievement in writing and the limited progress of some lower-attaining pupils.
- Leaders do not always set sharp enough targets for improvement focused on pupils' progress. It is therefore difficult to hold teachers to account for pupils' progress.
- Senior and middle leaders are not given enough time to carry out the roles for which they are responsible. As a result, they do not yet have a clear view of what still needs to be done to raise achievement.
- The use of additional funding that the school receives to support the most disadvantaged pupils is not rigorously evaluated. Consequently, leaders are not aware of the impact it is having on pupils' progress.

The school has the following strengths

- Mathematics is led and taught well throughout the school. As a consequence, the proportion of pupils making expected and more than expected progress in 2015 was above the national average.
- Pupils enjoy school, have good attitudes to learning and are keen to 'be the best we can'.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve pupils' achievement in writing by:
 - increasing the proportion of pupils making more than expected progress
 - providing regular opportunities for pupils to write at length in order to practise and apply their writing skills across other areas of the curriculum
 - ensuring there is a consistent approach to handwriting across the school
 - raising expectations of presentation in pupils' books.

- Strengthen the quality of teaching so it is consistently good or better by:
 - ensuring all lessons challenge pupils to achieve as well as they can, regardless of their starting points
 - ensuring that all teachers keep a close eye on pupils' learning and swiftly adjust the support that pupils receive when they are struggling
 - teachers following the school's policy to give pupils effective feedback, particularly in writing, to help them improve their work and building in time for pupils to respond
 - providing effective support to ensure the less able pupils make at least expected progress.

- Ensure that leaders, including governors, are sufficiently focused on securing good progress for pupils by:
 - sharpening improvement plans so that the impact of actions taken can be effectively evaluated
 - ensuring that information of pupils' starting points, particularly from Key Stage 1, are effectively used to plan for their needs
 - using assessment and monitoring information more effectively to identify underachievement, particularly of the less able pupils, and respond more quickly when this happens
 - keeping a closer eye on the impact of additional funding the school receives to support disadvantaged pupils.

An external review of the use of pupil premium funding should be undertaken in order to improve this aspect of leadership and management.

An external review of the use of sports funding should be undertaken in order to improve this aspect of leadership and management.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management requires improvement

- Leadership and management require improvement because leaders have been slow to respond to some recommendations for improvement since the previous inspection in 2012. Leaders have not rigorously evaluated the quality of teaching. As a consequence, teaching is not yet consistently good.
- Leaders recognise that the school's plans for improvement are not sharply focused on ensuring pupils make at least expected progress throughout the school. As a result, pupils' attainment at the end of Key Stage 2 is below the national average in writing.
- Many members of the senior leadership team have changed in the last year. Redefined roles of leaders have been put in place, some as recently as September 2015. These leaders are beginning to understand the role they play in the school. However, they have not been given sufficient time to carry out their roles effectively. As a result, their evaluations of, for example, the quality of teaching in reading and writing are not yet based on secure evidence of pupils' progress and, consequently, the impact on whole school improvement is slow.
- The school is committed to securing equal opportunities for all pupils. Pupil premium funding effectively supports most disadvantaged pupils. There is, however, very little analysis of which activity has made the difference to individuals. Although the gap between these pupils' attainment and that of other pupils is narrowing, it is not doing so quickly enough.
- There is very little evidence to show that additional funding for sport has been used to good effect and, in particular, to benefit disadvantaged pupils. Middle leaders with responsibility for leading physical education show the capacity to be able to influence further developments in this area. They have identified, for example, that confidence and expertise in teaching physical education are not consistent throughout the school. Middle leaders are planning to provide professional development for staff to see the good practice of others in order to enhance the provision and outcomes for pupils.
- Leaders have recently developed the curriculum in themes that start with novels. For example, *War Horse* stimulated some creative work where pupils thought carefully about writing their own story about a 'war dog'. Displays inside and outside of the classroom show clearly how pupils are developing their knowledge and understanding in a variety of subjects like science, geography and history. The curriculum is enhanced with visits such as the trips to the Royal Albert Hall and Tai Chi Centre. International links are formed to promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural knowledge. Fund-raising activities are organised, for example supporting children in Africa and the Poppy Appeal. Making good use of writing skills in other areas of the curriculum is not as evident in some classes. As a result, pupils do not always have opportunities to regularly practise and hone these skills. Including modern foreign languages in the wider curriculum is still in its early stages of development.
- In 2014, the local authority correctly identified the school as needing support and challenge. A warning notice was issued to the governing body and an improvement board was put in place. Following a governing body review and, as a result of the challenge of the improvement board, governors are now beginning to hold leaders to account more effectively. The local authority is continuing to support the school to ensure that it becomes a good school with at least good pupil outcomes.
- **The governance of the school**
 - Governors have a developing understanding of the quality of teaching in the school. Although governors work well with leaders, they have not always held leaders fully to account for pupils' progress. As a consequence, the governing body has been slow to act on areas of concern, for example the continued and significant underperformance in writing.
 - Governors have ensured that additional funding for disadvantaged pupils is used effectively and has a positive impact on most pupil outcomes. However, they have not rigorously checked which initiatives have worked well and which have not. The impact of additional funding for sport is not checked to determine how it is supporting staff development and improving pupils' skills and knowledge.
 - Governors are developing an understanding of the link between teachers' salary progression and pupils' achievement. Governors ensure that the headteacher's performance management and teachers' appraisals are carried out. They engage an external consultant to challenge them in this process.
- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Leaders work well with other agencies to ensure that pupils and families are well supported.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment requires improvement

- Teaching requires improvement because it is not consistently good in all classes. As a result, pupils' achievement is inconsistent, particularly in writing. The proportion of pupils who make better than expected progress across the school in reading and writing is not high enough.
- Some teachers do not always have high expectations of what pupils can do from their various starting points. In some lessons, the less-able pupils are not always supported effectively to ensure they make the best progress they can.
- Some teachers do not use assessment information to effectively check on pupils' understanding and move them on in their learning. However, there are some very good examples of teachers using questions skilfully to challenge pupils and make them think hard about what they are learning. This is particularly so in mathematics.
- Supporting pupils with next steps in their learning is not yet consistent in every class. As a consequence, pupils are not always aware of how they can improve their work or what they could try next.
- Teachers' expectations of the quality of work in pupils' books varies from class to class and between subjects. The presentation of pupils' work in their books is sometimes untidy, as is the handwriting of a small number of staff. There are, however, some examples of good presentation of work and higher expectations.
- Teachers do not all have the knowledge or skills to support pupils who are struggling to use their phonics (the sounds that letters represent) skills in reading. As a consequence, the less-able pupils are not making as much progress as they should. How widely and often pupils read is inconsistent between classes and year groups. Consequently, not all teachers effectively use pupils' enthusiasm for reading to influence their writing. In some classes the use of good-quality texts is clearly having an impact on pupils' reading and writing skills.
- The teaching of writing is not yet good in all classes. Not all pupils are secure in their knowledge and use of phonics. Consequently, in Years 3 and 4, pupils do not routinely use their phonics skills in their writing. As a matter of course, pupils in Years 5 and 6 are not encouraged to check their spelling, punctuation and grammar. Teachers do not create enough opportunities for pupils to write regularly, at length and in lessons other than English. As a result, pupils' written work is often not good enough and their progress is not as secure as it could be. Although there is evidence that the emphasis on improving writing is having some impact, in Years 3 and 6 for example, this is inconsistent, as is the presentation, care and pride that teachers insist upon in pupils' written work.
- Mathematics is taught well by the majority of teachers; their subject knowledge and skills in mathematics are good. As a consequence, identification of the gaps in pupils' knowledge is quick and support for pupils is put in place. Pockets of excellent practice seen in each year group by inspectors have been used well to positively influence achievement in mathematics across the school.
- Most teachers plan learning and support that helps disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs to make progress at a similar rate to their peers. Teachers deploy learning support assistants well in the majority of lessons.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare are good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils know about bullying and the various forms it takes. Pupils say that there used to be some bullying in the past but not now. Pupils are confident that teachers deal with any bullying if it occurs.
- Pupils know how to keep themselves safe in school and out in the community. They are clear on how to be safe on the internet and know to talk with their parents before using the internet.
- Pupils are keen to take on additional responsibilities and would welcome more. Pupils make a speech to their peers, for example, to say why they want to be a representative of the School Council. Pupils are proud of this role where they 'get to make the school a little better'.

- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is well organised and evident in displays, discussions with pupils and work in pupils' books. Senior leaders recognise that there is more work to do to ensure every opportunity is seized to reinforce the school's ethos to 'be the best we can be' so that pupils take more pride in their work. Pupils are very well cared for. Leaders do everything they can to ensure that pupils view the school as somewhere they come, not just to learn, but also to feel safe and learn from their mistakes. Opportunities for pupils to appreciate other cultures are well developed. Pupils are knowledgeable about different faiths and countries' traditions and are able to list those that are similar to their own.
- Parents spoken to during the inspection were very positive about the school and the leaders who 'care about every child'. There were many individual examples of where leaders have supported not just pupils but also their families, particularly those who move to the school during the academic year. As a result, pupils settle well and parents 'love the school'.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. They conduct themselves well in and around the school and are very polite and respectful of each other and adults. Displays such as 'if it's not kind, keep it in your mind' serve to remind pupils of how to treat others.
- Incidents of poor behaviour are rare. When they do occur, adults say that leaders deal with pupils fairly and consistently. Pupils are clear they should go to 'a trusted adult' if they have a problem.
- Pupils respect the school's rules and know them well. For example, they readily accept and adhere to the rota for using the play equipment in the playground.
- Adults consistently use the school's behaviour system and pupils understand the consequences if they do not behave well. Pupils say some pupils occasionally interrupt their learning, but 'teachers are really good at sorting it out'.
- Pupils' attitudes to learning are largely good, even when learning is not as challenging for some pupils as it might be. On these occasions pupils become fidgety and less attentive, but this does not occur routinely because pupils effectively self-manage their behaviour.
- The school's system for recording incidents of poor behaviour gives details of the incidents and colour codes them according to their importance, involving parents if the need arises. The information about the actions that have been taken is less comprehensive.
- The vast majority of parents spoken to during the inspection were very positive about pupils' behaviour and say that 'the school is quick to resolve any problems'. Pupils say behaviour is managed well by teachers and leaders.
- The school promotes regular attendance in a variety of ways. The impact of this is that pupils' attendance has improved since the last inspection. In most classes attendance is typically above the national average.

Outcomes for pupils

require improvement

- Outcomes for pupils require improvement because attainment in writing by the end of Key Stage 2 is significantly below the national average and has been so for the last three years. The proportion of pupils making expected progress and those making more than expected progress in writing is also below the national average.
- Pupils enter the school with outcomes at the end of Key Stage 1 that are broadly at or above the national average. The proportion of pupils making expected and more than expected progress as they move through Years 3, 4 and 5 is not high enough in reading and writing. Provision and teaching are inconsistent across the school, particularly for the less able. As a result, pupil outcomes for this group are variable and pupils in Year 6 have considerable gaps to fill in their knowledge, skills and understanding.
- Pupil outcomes in mathematics have risen consistently in the last three years. Good teaching in Year 6 led to progress in mathematics being significantly above the national average in 2015.
- Not all disadvantaged pupils achieved as well as their peers in reading in 2015. Their progress in mathematics and writing was similar to their peers. The school's own assessment information shows that the vast majority of disadvantaged pupils currently at the school are making good progress.
- Overall, disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs are making at least expected progress. Where teaching is good, individual pupils are sometimes making exceptional progress.
- Pupils are generally well-prepared for their next stage in education. Good links have been made with the local secondary schools to ensure that transition is as smooth as it can be and learning continues apace.

School details

Unique reference number	114704
Local authority	Essex
Inspection number	10005669

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Junior
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	7–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	360
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	David Chable
Headteacher	Carl Messer
Telephone number	01206 506800
Website	www.stgeorgesjunior.org
Email address	admin@st-georgesnewtown-jun.essex.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	26–27 June 2012

Information about this school

- St George’s New Town Junior School is a larger-than-average-sized junior school. Pupils are admitted mainly from one local infant school but a growing number are joining the school later in Key Stage 2.
- The school has grown in numbers since the last inspection, having expanded to take three classes per year group.
- The majority of pupils are White British. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups is below the national average but rising.
- The proportion of pupils whose first language is not English is below the national average. Although there are now 21 different languages spoken by pupils in the school, most pupils are not at the early stages of learning English.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs is below average. The proportion of pupils who have a statement of special educational need or an education, health and care plan is above the national average.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium is above average. This is additional funding for looked-after children and those known to be eligible for free school meals.
- There have been significant changes in staff members since the school was last inspected. The leadership team is relatively new, with the headteacher and one other senior leader being the only people who were at the school in 2012.
- A breakfast club is provided for pupils by the school.
- In 2015 the school met the government’s current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils’ attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 16 lessons, some of which were jointly observed with the headteacher or deputy headteacher. In addition, inspectors made a number of shorter visits to lessons and attended an assembly.
- Inspectors listened to pupils from Year 3 and Year 4 reading.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, senior leaders, members of staff, four members of the governing body, groups of pupils and a local authority representative.
- Inspectors examined a range of evidence, including the school's self-evaluation and development plans, the system to track pupils' progress, and policies and records relating to behaviour and attendance. They also looked at senior staff records of the monitoring, performance management information, safeguarding documentation and samples of pupils' work.
- The inspectors analysed questionnaires from nine members of staff and 16 pupils.
- The Parent View online survey responses of 37 parents were taken into account, along with views expressed during the inspection.

Inspection team

Ruth Brock, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
John Crane	Ofsted Inspector
Susan Cox	Ofsted Inspector
Olive Millington	Ofsted Inspector

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