

Littlebourne Church of England Primary School

Church Road, Littlebourne, Canterbury, Kent CT3 1XS

Inspection dates 23–24 September 2015

Overall effectiveness **Good**

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- The recently appointed head of school has increased the pace of improvement. She works closely with the executive headteacher and governors. Together, they provide strong and effective leadership for the school.
- Pupils' achievement has steadily improved since the last inspection. Pupils make good progress in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Governors make an important contribution to the school's leadership and to the school's improvement.
- Teachers and leaders are committed to ensuring the best education for all pupils.
- The quality of teaching has improved over the past year. Teachers plan activities which interest and engage pupils. They use assessment information with increasing accuracy to ensure that learning builds firmly on pupils' individual needs.
- Parents are pleased with improvements in the school since the previous inspection. They express confidence in the leadership and management of the school
- Pupils of all ages are well behaved. They happily play and work with each other. Pupils are positive about learning and know why it is important to do their best.
- Good relationships mean that pupils feel confident and secure. Safeguarding arrangements are robust so that pupils are safe.
- Good-quality early years provision helps children to settle into the Reception Year and make good progress.
- The positive and inclusive ethos in this small village school ensures that all staff and pupils feel valued.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Pupils' progress is a little slower in writing than in reading and mathematics.
- Teachers do not always have the highest expectations of pupils' abilities. Occasionally they set work which is not sufficiently challenging.
- There are too few opportunities for pupils to write at length. Pupils do not always apply basic writing skills correctly when writing in all subjects.
- The role played by subject leaders is not yet fully developed to support improvements in teaching.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Accelerate pupils' progress, particularly in writing, by:
 - making sure teachers have consistently high expectations of what pupils can achieve, setting work which extends and deepens their learning
 - providing more opportunities for pupils to write at length
 - making sure that pupils use basic skills correctly when completing writing tasks in different subjects.

- Strengthen the role played by the recently appointed subject leaders in improving pupils' achievement by making sure that they have opportunities to:
 - check the quality of teaching in their subject of responsibility
 - provide advice for teachers on how to improve the quality of teaching.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management is good

- Leaders and governors have ensured a consistent focus on improving the quality of teaching during an unsettled period for the school, with clear systems in place to check and improve staff performance. Following her appointment, the head of school quickly identified and rectified aspects of teaching which needed improving. As a result, pupils' progress has accelerated and achievement continues to improve.
- The head of school works closely with the executive headteacher. They are very clear about the school's strengths as well as future priorities for development. They know, for example, that teachers' expectations need to rise in response to rising achievement across the school.
- Leaders successfully combine high expectations of staff with effective support and encouragement. For example, the head of school works very successfully alongside teachers in the classrooms to help them to improve their practice. Training tailored to teachers' professional development needs has secured rapid improvements in the quality of teaching.
- The relatively new staff have quickly established themselves and staff morale is very good. There is a sense of shared purpose and energy in the school, as achievement lifts and all staff work together.
- Teachers and teaching assistants are quick to act on advice and are determined to build on the improvements already made in teaching and learning. They share leaders' vision for the school's future and are committed to ensuring the very best for every pupil.
- Leaders are committed to making sure all pupils have equal access to good quality teaching so that they achieve their full potential. They have improved the use of additional funding for disadvantaged pupils by targeting individual needs more closely. This has lifted this group's achievement over the past year.
- The head of school and executive headteacher know the pupils extremely well. They routinely check pupils' progress and meet with class teachers to discuss how well pupils are learning. They know how well different groups are progressing and look for trends in achievement. However, in this small school they pay just as much attention to the progress individual pupils are making.
- The recently appointed coordinator for special educational needs is experienced and well qualified. She is passionate about ensuring that every pupil achieves their potential and has lost no time in reviewing special needs provision. She ensures that teachers and teaching assistants understand pupils' needs and provide the most appropriate support available. She has improved links with parents, taking account of their views and making sure they know what help pupils are receiving.
- Additional funding is used effectively to narrow the gap between disadvantaged pupils' attainment and that of their classmates. Leaders check that support is making a difference and make changes where needed. For example, this year an additional teacher is working in the classrooms to ensure that pupils' needs are identified and addressed more promptly than before.
- Staff, leaders and governors are committed to strengthening the school's role at the heart of the village. Over the past two terms the school has played a more active part in the local community. The growing numbers of pupils joining the school reflect improved perceptions of the school's work in the local area.
- The new subject leaders are knowledgeable and committed. They are keen to get on with the job and have made a good start in getting to know the pupils and the school community. It is too soon, however, for them to have made a significant difference to improvements in pupils' achievement. While they have an accurate view of aspects of their subject responsibilities which need improving, they are less well informed about the quality of teaching. As yet, there have been few opportunities for them to advise their colleagues about aspects of teaching which could be improved. Senior leaders have rightly identified subject leadership as a priority to increase the pace of improvement in the school and have scheduled training to support this initiative.
- Leaders work well with parents to support pupils' learning. They make sure that parents can speak to them if they have a query and consider their views when updating policies, such as the homework policy. As a result, attendance rates have improved and parents are increasingly confident about the school's work.
- The primary PE and sports premium funding has been used well to involve pupils in physical activity. Leaders have increased the range of sports clubs available so that pupils have been able to try out new sports. Last year the school participated in more competitions and events with other schools, and the school's football team has been re-established. Sports coaches provide specialist advice for pupils and teachers. This has improved the teaching of physical education and extended pupils' skills.

- The local authority has worked closely with the school during a period of transition in leadership. The local authority brokered the existing successful partnership arrangements. Leaders have completed observations of learning in lessons with the local authority. Leaders regularly scrutinise teachers' plans and pupils' work. They speak with pupils about their learning.
- Pupils benefit from a broad, balanced and interesting curriculum. Opportunities for pupils to consider their role in relation to the wider community ensure that they look beyond the immediate locality. For example, they learn about the politics of European countries and the history of cultures such as Ancient Greece. Leaders have introduced more clubs, which have enthused and motivated pupils. For example, pupils in the choir told the inspector that they are excited about the possibility that they may be able to sing in a concert with other primary schools. Opportunities such as this help to build pupils' self-esteem and motivate them to explore personal interests.
- Leaders and teachers routinely review the way subjects are taught to support pupils' learning, making changes where appropriate to ensure that teaching is most effective. Whole-school topics and visits help pupils to work together on a theme. These topics are interspersed with class topics, when teachers and pupils explore particular interests in more depth. Leaders keep an overview of teaching to ensure coverage and progression.
- The school's religious ethos contributes well to the school's caring, inclusive and hard-working atmosphere. Adults successfully encourage pupils to appreciate and value spiritual, moral, social and cultural elements of their world. For example, during an art lesson in the school's 'Woodland Garden', pupils in Year 1 were intrigued to discover tiny conkers inside horse chestnut shells. They handled the objects carefully and enjoyed making patterns with natural objects.
- Assemblies are used well to explore and reinforce the school's community and British values. For example, during the inspection pupils suggested that qualities such as friendship, loyalty, worship and looking after each other all helped to make their community strong. In lessons, pupils discuss the meaning of terms such as 'liberty' and 'democracy' and give thoughtful responses. For example, Year 6 ideas about the meaning of 'liberty' included 'choosing a learning challenge', 'emancipation' and 'leading my own life'. Discussions such as these ensure that pupils are confident about expressing their opinions and are very well prepared with the skills and attitudes they need for life in modern Britain.
- Joint training with the partner school gives teachers more opportunities to share good ideas and practice and make sensible use of resources.
- **The governance of the school**
 - The local authority reviewed the governing body's role following the previous inspection. This triggered substantial changes in the governing body's work. The governing body was restructured to ensure greater accountability and challenge for leaders.
 - The chair of governors has been astute in securing specific expertise to support school improvement, including teacher and governor training and data analysis. They bring a wide range of complementary skills and experience to the school's leadership. The chair of governors makes sure new governors are fully aware of their responsibilities and the demands of the role.
 - Procedures for checking the school's work have now been tightened so that leaders are more accountable. They compare pupils' achievement with other schools nationally. They are alert to any trends in pupils' performance and ask searching and challenging questions about teaching and learning. Leaders' reports ensure governors know about the quality of teaching and understand how leaders are supporting improvements. They see teaching and learning for themselves when visiting lessons and talking with pupils about their work.
 - Effective financial management ensures the budget is secure and used appropriately. Governors know how additional funding is used and how well this is helping disadvantaged pupils to achieve.
 - Governors complete regular audits of safeguarding arrangements. Governors are knowledgeable about the potential risks of extremism and radicalisation and have discussed this in relation to the school's context. They have scheduled appropriate training in the near future.
- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. All areas are well organised and the playground and outdoor areas are pleasant, well cared for and secure. Good-quality equipment and fencing ensure that pupils are safe. Leaders make sure that policies are up to date. They complete recruitment checks thoroughly and ensure that staff are well qualified. The governors and caretaker addressed the few actions identified in a recent fire and safety audit promptly and fully.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good

- Teachers are enthusiastic and committed. They are keen to learn and quickly respond to advice about how they can improve their practice.
- Classrooms are attractive and well organised, with resources arranged so that pupils can use them whenever needed.
- Teachers usually set work with the right level of challenge for pupils of differing abilities. They have higher expectations of pupils' abilities than previously and most of the work set requires pupils to think carefully about their answers. However, sometimes pupils find the work too easy or too hard. When this is the case, pupils' progress slows.
- In mathematics, teachers give pupils more opportunities to practise mathematical skills and to solve problems than previously. Leaders have revised the calculation policy to ensure that there is a consistent approach across the school.
- Teaching assistants provide, calm, quiet support for individual pupils and small groups. This helps most pupils to sustain concentration during lessons, including pupils with special educational needs. They successfully clarify and reinforce teaching points. For example, a teaching assistant in a Year 1 English lesson gave pupils a timely reminder to include capital letters and full stops in their writing.
- Teachers promote and reinforce good working habits. For example, during an English lesson pupils were encouraged to read their work aloud so that they were able to spot and correct mistakes more easily. As a result, pupils become increasingly responsible for improving their work and are prepared well for the next stage in their education.
- The teaching of reading has improved over the past year. Teachers are confident when teaching phonics (letters and the sounds they make) skills so that pupils have strategies to help them to read. Teachers confidently support pupils' understanding of texts. Reading games and rewards increase pupils' motivation to read widely and often. The library is well resourced, with good-quality books. Pupils who spoke to the inspector say they enjoy using the library, pointing to books written by their favourite authors.
- Teachers have high expectations of the written work pupils complete in their English books, including accurate use of spelling, grammar and punctuation. However, they do not always have the same high expectations when pupils write in subjects other than English. Teachers provide regular opportunities for pupils to write. However, there are too few opportunities for pupils to write at length, and so to develop ideas and improve skills such as the use of paragraphs and story structure.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare are good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupil's personal development and welfare is good. Pupils want to do well and understand why it is important to do their best. They are positive about learning and take care with their work. Most present their work neatly and the quality of handwriting has improved over the past year.
- Pupils respect adults in the school, responding proudly when teachers and teaching assistants comment on their good work and behaviour. Pupils are comfortable about asking adults for help if they are unsure, because relationships are good.
- Pupils in Year 6 lead the younger pupils by example. They are mature, polite and smartly dressed. They contribute fully to events such as assemblies and look after younger pupils during breaktimes and lunchtimes.
- Pupils enjoy using a wide range of resources during lunch breaks, such as hoops and footballs, happily joining in with traditional games and activities. Activities such as these support pupils' good behaviour and help them to develop social skills. One pupil said, 'I love school. I love everything about it.' They are active and busy during playtimes and participate enthusiastically in the school's sports clubs.
- Pupils know what they can do to stay safe, including when using the internet. For example, some gave a detailed account of the safety mistakes a film character made during a recent film about internet safety shown during an assembly. Pupils in the e-safety committee reinforce key messages and important information by talking to pupils and parents during assemblies.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. They are polite and welcoming, enthusiastically talking to visitors about their work.
- Pupils work quietly during lessons and listen carefully to their classmates' ideas. However, occasionally a few pupils find it difficult to stay focused during lessons, so that their attention wanders and their progress slows.
- Pupils behave extremely well during breaktimes and whole-school events such as assemblies. Pupils of all ages know and respect the school's rules and routines. Bullying is rarely an issue. Leaders deal promptly and appropriately with any concerns which arise. All parents who completed the online questionnaire feel that pupils are well behaved.
- Pupils' enjoyment of school is reflected in attendance rates, which are much higher than the national average. There has been no persistent absence over the past year.

Outcomes for pupils

are good

- Pupils' achievement has improved steadily since the previous inspection. Pupils make good progress in reading, writing and mathematics. While small and varying numbers of pupils in each year group cause some variations in published achievement data, the work in their books illustrates the rapid progress they make from their starting points.
- In 2014, attainment at the end of Year 2 was above average in reading, writing and mathematics. School data about pupils' achievement indicate that improvements in attainment at the end of Year 2 were sustained in 2015, with a further increase in the proportion attaining the highest levels in mathematics.
- At the end of Year 6, pupils' attainment levelled off in reading, writing and mathematics in 2015. However, the school's progress information indicates that pupils in this cohort made good progress, despite the fact that some did not attain nationally expected levels. The proportion attaining the higher levels (Level 5) increased in writing and mathematics.
- The results of the Year 1 phonics check increased markedly to above average levels in 2014. This trend continued in 2015, with a further increase in results.
- Pupils like reading and do so regularly at home. They are able to use different techniques efficiently to help them to read unknown words, including phonics. They speak about books maturely and with interest, developing preferences for favourite authors and genres as they move up through the school.
- In mathematics, pupils of all abilities use equipment increasingly to help them with their work. This helps them to tackle mathematical problems more confidently, while strengthening their understanding of concepts such as place value.
- Pupils make slightly slower progress in writing than in reading and mathematics. While their use of basic literacy skills, such as punctuation and grammar, has improved when writing in their English books, they do not always transfer these skills to writing in other subjects. As a result, there are slight variations in the quality of written work across the curriculum. Pupils do not have enough opportunities to develop ideas and practise technical language skills in longer pieces of writing.
- Disadvantaged pupils make similar progress to their classmates and to other pupils nationally. The gap between their attainment and other pupils narrowed in 2014, both nationally and within school. There were very few eligible pupils in Year 6 in 2014, so their progress and attainment are not reported in detail.
- Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs make good progress. The older pupils are very clear about what they need to do to improve their learning. One pupil spoke to the inspector with great maturity and determination about the importance of being able to read confidently in readiness for secondary education. Such positive attitudes make a strong contribution to helping pupils to prepare for the next stage of their learning.

Early years provision

is good

- Children join the Reception Year with skills and experiences which vary from year to year. Clear routines and good relationships help them to feel secure so that they settle quickly. Safeguarding arrangements are given a high priority so that children are safe and happy.

- Children behave well and make good progress in developing social skills, such as sharing and taking account of their classmates' views.
- Adults are caring and well qualified. They know the children very well and are alert to their individual needs. The newly appointed early years teacher has focused on the right priorities by getting to know the children and establishing positive relationships with parents and staff. She plans lessons which are fun and engaging, so that children are keen to learn. She is responsive to their needs and works very well with the teaching assistant.
- Classrooms are attractive and well organised. Useful words displayed on the classroom walls support the development of children's language skills. A plentiful supply of good-quality books successfully fosters children's interest in books and a love of reading. Children's work is valued and displayed with care.
- The outdoor area is secure and popular with the children. The activities contribute well to children's learning and development so that they make good progress. However, as with other year groups, the tasks are not always sufficiently challenging to ensure that children make the best possible progress.
- Early years provision is well led by the head of school. She works closely with teachers and teaching assistants to ensure that teaching caters for children's differing needs.
- Small numbers and variations in the proportions of children with additional needs led to differences in children's attainment at the end of Reception Year from year to year. Last year, children's achievement was also affected by an element of weaker teaching, so that some were not as well prepared as leaders would have liked. However, this has now been rectified, with extra support for pupils in Year 1 to help them to make up for lost time. Children are making better progress in early years this year than previously because leaders have ensured that teaching is good quality.
- The executive headteacher and head of school are highly ambitious for children's achievement in early years. All member of the early years team share the leadership team's vision for the future of early years. They are clear about the key priorities for improving teaching and learning.
- Parents are positive about early years provision in the school. They point to improvements since the previous inspection, including closer links with the on-site nursery so that children who transfer into the school find the move easier.

School details

Unique reference number	118657
Local authority	Kent
Inspection number	10002361

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	77
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	David Stanley
Headteacher	Renuka Chinnadurai (Executive Headteacher), Stella Byrne (Head of School)
Telephone number	01227 721671
Website	www.littlebourne.kent.sch.uk
Email address	office@littlebourne.kent.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	25–26 September 2013

Information about this school

- The school is smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- The proportion of pupils supported by the pupil premium is average. The pupil premium is additional government funding to support those pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and those in the care of the local authority.
- Most pupils are White British.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported is above average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- The school has three mixed-age classes. The reception and Year 1 pupils are in one class; years 2 and 3 are taught in the second class and years 4, 5 and 6 are taught in the third class. Pupils are taught in separate year groups for some subjects during the week, including English and mathematics.
- The school provides full-time early years provision in a mixed class of reception children and Year 1 pupils. The reception children are taught separately at times during the week.
- The executive headteacher is headteacher of Bridge and Patricxbourne CofE Primary School. She and the head of school provide strategic direction for Littlebourne CofE Primary School. The head of school is responsible for the school's day-to-day management. The two schools work in partnership.
- Most staff and teachers in the school have been appointed since the previous inspection.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed pupils' learning in seven lessons or part lessons with the head of school.
- Discussions were held with the executive headteacher, head of school, senior leaders, teachers, members of staff, a representative of the local authority, parents and pupils. A meeting was also held with a group of governors.
- The inspector took account of 37 responses to the online questionnaire, Parent View. In addition, she considered the views expressed by parents who spoke with her informally at the start of the school day.
- The inspector observed the school's work and considered a range of documents and policies, including the school's improvement plan, information about pupils' progress, attendance records and safeguarding policies and procedures.
- The inspector looked at a sample of pupils' work provided by the school, as well as looking at pupils' work in lessons. She listened to pupils in Year 2 and Year 6 reading.

Inspection team

Julie Sackett, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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