

Sir Henry Fermor Church of England Primary School

Crowborough Hill, Crowborough, East Sussex TN6 2SD

Inspection dates

7–8 October 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	Requires improvement
Outcomes for pupils	Requires improvement
Early years provision	Requires improvement
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- Prior to recent changes, leaders and governors did not do enough to make sure that teachers were accountable for pupils' progress or to help teachers to improve. Because of this, too many pupils are not achieving well, particularly in mathematics.
- Only recently has the leadership team given middle leaders training and enough opportunities to make improvements to teaching, learning and assessment. As a result, teaching has not enabled pupils to make good progress over time.
- Subject leaders do not robustly check the progress of pupils. They do not ensure that all groups of pupils are on track to achieve well.
- Teachers do not use questioning enough to check pupils' understanding or deepen learning.
- Teachers do not accurately consider what pupils can already do when planning lessons. As a result, work is not always well matched to pupils' needs.
- Some teaching assistants intervene too quickly when pupils are stuck. Pupils are not given sufficient time to think problems through.
- Pupils do not always work hard or listen well enough. Some opportunities to learn are wasted. Staff do not always use the clear system for behaviour management consistently to ensure that behaviour is good.
- In the Reception year, activities sometimes do not meet children's needs sufficiently. Consequently, the most-able children in particular do not make good progress across all areas of learning.

The school has the following strengths

- The interim executive headteacher and acting headteacher know what needs to be done to improve the school. Their swift actions have already brought about improvements to teaching and learning.
- The school is a safe and caring place. Safeguarding requirements are met.
- The highly effective interim executive board provides clear direction, challenge and support to leaders.
- The strong Christian ethos, based around the value of respect, prepares pupils well for life in modern Britain.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching and secure good outcomes for pupils, particularly in mathematics, by ensuring that:
 - teachers make good use of information about pupils' starting points to set work that is better suited to pupils' learning needs
 - teachers make better use of questioning to check pupils' understanding and to challenge and extend their learning
 - teaching assistants give pupils time to think and solve problems for themselves.
- Improve pupils' behaviour by ensuring that:
 - teachers and other adults support pupils in increasing their levels of concentration and making sure that pupils apply themselves fully to their work
 - all staff consistently apply the behaviour policy and challenge inappropriate behaviour.
- Strengthen leadership and management by:
 - further developing the abilities of middle leaders to make improvements to teaching, learning and assessment
 - ensure subject leaders take more responsibility for tracking and monitoring the progress of all groups of pupils.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management requires improvement

- Until recently, senior leaders did not give middle leaders sufficient responsibility, training or opportunities to monitor and improve teaching, learning and assessment. As a result, the impact of their work has been limited, their skills underdeveloped and the quality of teaching has suffered.
- Over time, the senior leadership team has not ensured that subject leaders rigorously check the progress of different groups of pupils. In particular, subject leaders have not been checking that the most-able, those with special educational needs and disadvantaged pupils have been making enough progress. This means that subject leaders do not have an accurate understanding of the quality of teaching and pupils' progress in their subject.
- The new interim executive headteacher and acting headteacher have quickly formed an effective and efficient partnership. In a short space of time, they have made many essential changes to the way that the school works. For example, they have put in place new policies and procedures to keep pupils safe. Both leaders are determined to improve the school and increase parents' confidence in its work.
- The recently appointed headteachers and the interim executive board have established a culture of high expectations for all. New systems have been put into place to hold teachers to account for pupils' progress. It is clear that only the best is good enough.
- Senior leaders have a clear understanding of the school's performance. They have correctly recognised the need to make rapid improvements to teaching and subject leadership, and to provide additional training for teachers. Some teachers and leaders receive personalised support from the teaching school alliance. This has enabled the mathematics leader to make much needed changes to the way that mathematics is taught, assessed and monitored throughout the school.
- Leadership is now being encouraged at all levels. For example, two teachers have set about rejuvenating the school's curriculum so that it includes 'wow moments' such as exciting educational visits to inspire a love of learning in pupils. Although these wow moments are not fully developed, the curriculum meets requirements and is broad and balanced. Extra-curricular activities such as dance club support pupils' personal development and allow them to explore their interests more deeply.
- The school has a strong Christian ethos based around the value of 'respect'. Through this, pupils learn to appreciate differences and respect the beliefs of others. Teachers rightly promote tolerance of other faiths in religious education lessons as pupils learn about different faiths. Pupils also learn about rules and democracy. Pupils are well prepared for life in modern Britain.
- The leadership team promotes spiritual and moral awareness extensively through links with the church and regular reflection time. For example, a special harvest service held at the church allowed pupils to practise their social skills and unite with the wider community to celebrate this festival. Although pupils learn about other faiths, they have fewer opportunities to learn about other cultures.
- Leaders have reviewed and made changes to the way that vulnerable groups are supported. Because of this, the needs of disadvantaged pupils and those with special educational needs and disabilities are met more effectively and their progress has increased. Pupil premium funding is spent effectively.
- The local authority has provided a significant amount of necessary support to aid the school's development. In particular, work to ensure that assessments are accurate has enabled leaders and teachers to start to plan more effectively for pupils' learning.
- The additional sports funding is used well. Pupils have had increased opportunities to participate in competitive sport. Frequent swimming lessons for all pupils from Reception to Year 4 ensure that they acquire this essential skill as early as possible. Plans are in place, through a partnership with Beacon Academy, to tailor activities more precisely for talented pupils and those with medical needs.
- **The governance of the school**
 - The interim executive board is highly effective. Members have significant expertise that enables them to provide clear direction, challenge and support to the school's leaders. Because the members have an accurate understanding of the school's performance, they have ensured that ambitious improvement plans are in place and that no time has been wasted in implementing much needed changes.
 - Board members have a high regard for their duties and have led important work to improve safeguarding, secure the school's finances and plan for the future. The interim executive board has committed to keeping parents informed, including holding regular meetings about changes to leadership and improvements that have already been made.

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. There are clear systems in place that everyone understands and that keep pupils safe. The school works well with parents and appropriate agencies to make sure pupils are fully supported. Leaders regularly review and refine practice to ensure that pupils' safety remains a priority.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment requires improvement

- Teaching is not yet consistently good throughout the school. As a result, not enough pupils make good progress from their starting points. Pupils' progress in reading, writing and mathematics varies between classes.
- Teachers do not always consider how well pupils are learning in lessons or make use of this information to plan what work to set next. This means that work is not always well matched to pupils' varying abilities.
- Not all teachers use questioning well enough. Teachers do not always ask questions to check that pupils understand what they have been taught and use this to adjust the lesson to challenge pupils or make work easier. Because of this, pupils' progress slows.
- Pupils are not always given enough opportunities to develop their own strategies or become confident in themselves. When pupils have challenging work, teaching assistants tend to intervene too quickly rather than allowing pupils to work things out for themselves.
- Disadvantaged pupils and those with disabilities and special educational needs receive appropriate additional support to help them catch up. However, teachers are not yet making the best use of the information from checks on these pupils' learning, during these extra sessions, to plan the next steps in the classroom.
- This academic year, leaders have launched a suitable assessment system that tracks progress across all subjects in the new curriculum. Teachers are already using this to gather important information about each pupil's learning. Parents have not yet received information about how the new system works. Responses to the online questionnaire indicate that parents want to receive better information about the progress that their child is making.
- Training at the start of this term has helped teachers and teaching assistants gain a better knowledge of phonics (letters and the sounds they make). In one very effective lesson, the teacher's enthusiastic use of song, jumping games and play dough helped to reinforce children's learning. However, the quality of phonics teaching is still variable because work set in some classes does not match pupils' abilities as well as it should.
- Recent changes to the way that mathematics is taught has meant that there are more opportunities for pupils to develop a secure understanding of the subject and gain access to challenging work. Pupils say that they enjoy learning, especially when they have to think hard. Pupils are increasingly able to persevere and challenge themselves, choosing appropriately from their list of tasks called 'chilli hot challenges'.
- In the best lessons, teachers focus appropriately on giving pupils opportunities to apply their reading, writing and mathematics skills. Nevertheless, teachers do not always give pupils chances to practise these skills regularly enough in all subjects or reinforce them when marking pupils' work.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare require improvement

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare requires improvement.
- Too many pupils do not listen well or work hard enough in the classroom. Pupils do not concentrate or complete as much work as they could. Consequently, when this is the case, learning slows.
- Leaders and teachers are taking steps to help pupils become more confident and successful learners. Each Friday a headteacher's award is given to a child in each class in recognition of the special effort they have made in their learning that week. In an art lesson, pupils were encouraged to share their solutions to problems and celebrate their successes. Teachers are beginning to help pupils to realise that they can improve if they believe in themselves and work hard.
- The oldest pupils are rightly encouraged to take pride in their school and support other pupils. A head boy and a head girl are appointed weekly from Year 6 pupils. This allows all pupils a chance to experience leadership. Tasks include giving out learning awards and showing visitors around the school. Younger pupils are keen to have more responsibilities and have asked for the introduction of a school council so that they

can say how the school could be better.

- Parents feel that their children are happy, safe and well cared for at school. Pupils understand different types of bullying and that it is not acceptable. Pupils are confident that adults will respond quickly to resolve incidents or problems that they might have. Some pupils say that adults have helped them build and sustain friendships.
- The curriculum teaches pupils about safety well. For example, they have thorough knowledge of how to stay safe when they are using the internet. Pupils know that they must not chat to strangers online. Regular visits from the fire brigade and road safety lessons help pupils to understand how to keep themselves safe in a range of situations. As a result, pupils confidently express and understand how to keep themselves safe.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement.
- Pupils do not always behave well around the school. Occasionally, some older pupils move through corridors and down stairs noisily and are boisterous during breaktimes. In some lessons, valuable learning time is lost because pupils are easily distracted and not focused on the tasks that the teacher has set.
- The school has a clear system for managing behaviour with appropriate rewards and sanctions in place. However, not all staff consistently and persistently follow the guidelines and expectations and do not ensure that pupils' conduct and learning behaviour are appropriate at all times.
- The school works closely with parents and appropriate agencies to support pupils with challenging behaviour. Personalised plans enable these pupils to develop and use strategies to moderate their behaviour in school. As a result, their behaviour has improved over time and there were no fixed term or permanent exclusions last year.
- Pupils' attendance is in line with that of other pupils nationally. Leaders regularly check attendance and provide support for those with high absence. Because of this, the attendance of disadvantaged pupils has improved.

Outcomes for pupils

require improvement

- Outcomes require improvement because, despite recent acceleration in pupils' progress, not enough pupils are achieving well from their starting points. The progress of pupils varies across year groups in reading, writing and mathematics, reflecting variations in the quality of teaching.
- Recent changes to leadership have ensured that teachers have raised their expectations and are aiming higher. However, this has not yet enabled all pupils, particularly those in Key Stage 2, to make strong progress from their starting points over time.
- Progress in mathematics is not rapid enough to ensure that pupils achieve as well as they should. Not enough pupils made sufficient progress and reached the expected standard at the end of Year 6, in 2015. Rates of progress vary considerably across different year groups. As a result, many pupils, particularly those in Year 5 and Year 6, still have some gaps in their mathematical understanding.
- Despite an increase in the proportion of children reaching a good level of development at the end of the Reception Year in 2015, not enough children, including the most-able, make strong progress from their starting points across all areas of learning.
- Disadvantaged pupils, disabled pupils and those with special educational needs across the school are now making better progress than they have in the past. Rates of progress are now similar to their classmates. This is because these pupils now receive better support. More disadvantaged pupils reached the expected standards at the end of Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 in 2015. However, progress is not as rapid as it could be. This is because teachers are not making sure that the work they set in lessons fully takes account of the impact of extra support received by disadvantaged pupils.
- More pupils reached the higher levels in Year 2 and Year 6 in 2015. Nevertheless, the most-able pupils throughout the school are not achieving as well as they should because tasks are not always challenging enough.
- In reading, the proportion of pupils achieving the standards expected for their age increased in Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 in 2015 and is now in line with national averages. However, not enough pupils met the expected standard in phonics in Year 1 because teachers' subject knowledge is not strong enough. Teachers have received specific training in phonics this term but it is too early to see the impact of this.
- Progress in writing has improved in Reception and Key Stage 1, where it was weaker in the past.

Achievement in writing is in line with the national average at the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage. Attainment in writing at the end of Year 2 is improving and more pupils are achieving the standards expected for their age.

Early years provision

requires improvement

- Children join the school with skills and abilities that are at least typical for their age. A higher proportion of children than nationally are ready for Year 1. However, not all children make the progress that they should, particularly the most-able. The progress of the most-able children is uneven across the different areas of learning and they make less progress than expected in physical development and personal, social and emotional development.
- Teachers and other adults do not always use their knowledge of the children to plan activities that match children's needs closely enough. Sometimes, opportunities to ask challenging questions to help children think and find out more are missed. As a result, children do not always make the progress that they should across all areas of learning.
- There were very few disadvantaged pupils last year. Therefore, effectiveness of the use of additional funding to support disadvantaged pupils cannot be reported without identifying the children.
- Leaders have an accurate understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the early years. They have used this to make some important and well-considered changes. For example, teachers now plan together to ensure that children have interesting activities across the areas of learning inside and outside. During the inspection, some children enjoyed working together to build a marble run and showed sustained concentration and good problem solving skills. The teacher was able to use this example to show how some children are already working better together.
- Strong relationships with parents and local pre-schools are in place. Parents appreciate opportunities to bring their children to join in with lunches and story sessions before children start school. Workshops and newsletters ensure that parents work in close partnership with the school and share information about their child's development that helps teachers to understand their needs better. Teachers visit pre-schools to get to know children and find out about what children can do before they start school.
- Staff take good care of the children and prioritise keeping them safe. Risk assessments are in place for all activities and staff ensure that children know how to conduct themselves safely. A good example of this was seen during the inspection when children showed that they could safely make a fruit salad because they were shown how to cut up fruit correctly. One child proudly displayed her carefully halved grape declaring, 'I did this!'

School details

Unique reference number	114548
Local authority	East Sussex
Inspection number	10007870

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	392
Appropriate authority	Interim executive board
Chair	Penny Gaunt
Headteacher	Rachel Green (Interim executive headteacher), Laura Hill (Acting headteacher)
Telephone number	01892 652405
Website	http://www.sirhfermor.e-sussex.sch.uk/
Email address	office@sirhfermor.e-sussex.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	16–17 July 2013

Information about this school

- Sir Henry Fermor Church of England Primary School is a larger-than-average sized primary school.
- Few pupils are disadvantaged (those who qualify for pupil premium, which is additional funding for pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals and children who are looked after by the local authority). In some year groups there are almost no disadvantaged pupils.
- Most pupils are White British. A very small minority of pupils speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of pupils who are disabled or have special educational needs is above average.
- In March 2015, an interim executive board replaced the governing body of the school.
- In May 2015, the headteacher resigned and an interim executive headteacher from the Teaching School Alliance for West Kent and East Sussex took over the leadership of the school for two and a half days each week. The deputy headteacher became acting headteacher and leads the school for the other two and half days.
- The Teaching School Alliance for West Kent and East Sussex provides support to the school.
- The school meets 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 18 lessons and parts of lessons, four of which were conducted jointly with senior leaders.
- Meetings were held with senior leaders, staff, pupils and three members of the interim executive board.
- Inspectors spoke to eight parents in the playground and took into account 118 responses, including 76 comments to the online questionnaire (Parent View). They also considered one letter from a parent.
- A range of documents was looked at including the school's information about pupils' achievement, records concerning pupils' attendance and behaviour and documents relating to how the school keeps pupils safe.

Inspection team

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