

Acton Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School

Lambert Drive, Acton, Sudbury CO10 0US

Inspection dates	3–4 November 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
Early years provision	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- Pupils' attainment at the end of Key Stage 2 in 2015 was below the national average in mathematics, reading, and grammar, punctuation and spelling.
- The quality of teaching in Key Stage 2 is not good enough. Teachers do not have high enough expectations of the quality of pupils' work, particularly in mathematics and reading. They do not set work at the right level for the most-able pupils.
- Pupils in the current Year 6 have some way to go to reach national expectations in 2016 in mathematics. They are two terms behind where they should be.
- The school's systems for assessing pupils' learning and progress are in their infancy. Teachers do not use assessment information well enough to challenge pupils or to intervene quickly to support pupils who are struggling.
- Leaders' and governors' evaluation of achievement and teaching is over-generous. As a consequence, they have not swiftly tackled areas that need improvement.
- Leaders have not made effective use of performance management processes. As performance targets are undefined, it is difficult for leaders to hold teachers to account.
- Middle and senior leaders, some of whom are new to their posts, do not contribute well enough to raising standards of achievement in the areas for which they are responsible.
- The school's new curriculum is at an early stage in its development. As a consequence, there is no clear information about how pupils will develop their knowledge, skills and understanding or how progress will be assessed in various subjects, such as history and geography.

The school has the following strengths

- Pupils feel safe and behave well. They are polite and courteous and develop confidence and self-esteem.
- There is good teaching and effective practice in the early years and Key Stage 1, which leaders are beginning to share. As a result, some improvements in teaching are evident.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Strengthen the quality of teaching so that it is good or better by:
 - ensuring all lessons challenge pupils, especially the most able, 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
 - providing pupils with more effective feedback to help them improve their work.

- Improve pupils' achievement in Key Stage 2 to consistently good in mathematics, reading, and grammar, punctuation and spelling by:
 - systematically teaching pupils the strategies they need to spell correctly and use grammar and punctuation effectively in their written work
 - ensuring that the teaching of reading is effective and that pupils read widely and often
 - ensuring that pupils are developing their mathematical skills, knowledge and understanding and effectively applying them through other areas of the curriculum
 - ensuring that teachers have consistently high expectations of the quality and presentation of pupils' work.

- Ensure that leaders, including governors, are sufficiently focused on securing good progress for pupils by:
 - using assessment and monitoring information more effectively to identify and remedy any underachievement
 - setting sharper targets in development planning and performance management so that governors can play a fuller part in holding leaders to account for pupils' progress
 - strengthening the role of middle and senior leaders so that they fully understand the part they play in raising standards.

An external review of governance should be undertaken in order to improve this aspect of leadership and management.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management requires improvement

- Leaders' and governors' evaluation of achievement and teaching is over-generous. As a consequence, leaders have not swiftly tackled all areas that need improvement.
 - Senior leaders have not made effective use of performance management processes. Targets for improvement have not been regularly checked. Therefore, teachers have not been held to account for pupils' underachievement.
 - The school's plans for improvement correctly identify priorities and actions that need to be taken. However, targets are not sharp enough to enable leaders to check whether these planned actions are on track towards the intended outcomes. This has meant that leaders have been too slow to act and, as a consequence, pupils' outcomes in 2015 were not high enough.
 - The headteacher has recently developed some middle and senior leaders' roles. However, leaders' understanding of the part that they play in raising pupils' achievement is still developing. As a consequence, evaluations of provision, such as the quality of teaching of reading and grammar, punctuation and spelling, are not yet based on secure evidence.
 - The school is committed to securing equal opportunities for all pupils. Pupil premium funding supports disadvantaged pupils well. As a result, the gap between these pupils' attainment and that of other pupils is narrowing.
 - The additional funding for sport has been used effectively to employ a specialist sports coach to enhance the knowledge and skills of staff. As a consequence, a wide variety of sports activities is offered and the school has gained the Healthy Schools award. Pupils have positive attitudes towards competitiveness and working together, culminating in the 'mini-Olympics' event, which is held each year. Cycling proficiency classes are popular and prepare pupils well for safety on the roads.
 - The assessment of pupils' progress in all areas of the new curriculum is still developing as learning steps are not clearly defined. The curriculum includes a full range of subjects, with many practical activities that pupils enjoy, such as tending the organic garden. Pupils' experiences are also enhanced by visits to places of interest. For example, Year 4 pupils were excited about their trip to Colchester Castle, which complemented their English work on 'revolting Romans'. Inspectors saw a visiting music specialist who was teaching pupils of all ages to play various brass instruments to great effect. There is also a wide range of well-attended after-school clubs for activities including football, French, guitar and gardening.
 - Pupils are well prepared for life in modern Britain. They elect a school council and more recently, a faith council. Pupils also apply for other positions of responsibility in the school, such as contributing to assemblies. Pupils are proud to carry out these roles and recognise their importance. Although pupils show tolerance and respect towards each other, their knowledge of other cultures in the UK is limited.
 - The headteacher has introduced 'Learning Together' time for parents. Workshops dealing with issues such as 'growing and changing' and 'safety with medicines' have been very well attended. Not only are parents better informed about what their children are learning but they also get the opportunity to work alongside their children in the classrooms.
- **The governance of the school**
- Since the previous inspection, there have been a number of changes to the membership of the governing body. This has resulted in some slippage in tracking the action taken on areas of improvement identified by the last inspection, including pupils' progress. Governors say that the information they receive from school leaders about pupils' achievement needs to be clearer. They were not, for example, expecting the low pupils' outcomes in Year 6 in 2015, and so were not in a position to provide appropriate challenge and support.
 - Governors have employed support from the local authority and two external consultants. However, the impact that this support has had on pupils' achievement is not yet evident. Governors agree that they will need to keep a closer check on pupils' progress this year, particularly at the end of Key Stage 2.
 - Governors are developing their understanding of different aspects of the school's work. For example, they now play a fuller role in the development of the school's improvement plan. They are confident that the right priorities have been identified for the coming year. They recognise the need to evaluate progress against intended outcomes regularly and rigorously, and to pay closer attention to the evidence that is presented to them by school leaders.
 - Although governors know about the performance of teachers and understand the link between performance targets, pupils' progress and teachers' pay, they have not made effective use of this

system to hold leaders to account.

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. The headteacher works well with professionals outside the school to ensure that pupils are safe and families supported.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment requires improvement

- Teaching requires improvement because it is not effective in all classes and in particular in Key Stage 2. As a result, pupils' achievement is inconsistent, particularly in mathematics and reading.
- Teachers do not use assessment information well enough to check on pupils' understanding, particularly in mathematics. Pupils who are struggling are not spotted quickly enough, and consequently their misconceptions are not corrected. Conversely, pupils who learn quickly and need to be challenged are not always given more difficult work.
- Teachers' expectations of the quality of work in pupils' books varies from class to class and between subjects. As a result, pupils largely associate 'doing well' with 'neat handwriting' rather than with challenging themselves to do the best work they can. The school's marking and response policy is being implemented inconsistently throughout the school. There are, however, some good examples of teachers' comments supporting pupils' 'next steps' and of pupils responding to teachers' challenges.
- Good examples were observed of teachers using questions skilfully to make pupils think hard and respond. In one class, pupils were asked to decide what they would like to use in designing their own information leaflet; the quality of discussion was good because the teacher's expectations were made very explicit. As one pupil said, 'I'd like to have a map on my leaflet so that you can see where you need to get to and say to yourself, "aha, it's only a mile away"'.
- Teaching of phonics (the sounds that letters represent) is effective. This has led to an increase in the number of pupils reaching the standard expected in Year 1. Phonic skills are used well by pupils when they read. However, reading is insufficiently encouraged further up the school. The school has chosen to base its English curriculum on selected novels that are likely to motivate pupils and this is beginning to have a positive impact on older pupils' attitudes to reading. This is not yet well developed across the school.
- The teaching of writing is improving. A new approach to pupils' independent writing is contributing to the good progress being made by an increasing number of pupils. This is not yet consistent across the school. Opportunities for pupils to write at length are not regular enough. As a result, pupils are not having sufficient practice in using grammar, punctuation and spelling in their writing.
- Teachers plan learning and support that help disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs to make progress at a similar rate to their peers. Teaching assistants are used well to support and motivate individual pupils and to ensure they understand what they have to do.
- Some teachers plan learning that is fun and exciting in lessons and during external visits. For example, children developing their fine motor skills in the Reception Year class excitedly demonstrated how they could feel the 'delicate jelly balls, which we must be careful not to break', and photographs taken during the recent Year 6 residential trip show pupils using their initiative when working as a team to build a structure using sticks. Teachers use computer programs, interactive white boards and pupils' own work to engage pupils in planned activities.
- Homework and the way it is used within the classroom are developing. Tasks are appropriate to the age of the pupils and they respond well to their homework, as do the parents.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

is 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. They say bullying is rare. Pupils are confident that leaders 'will sort it out very quickly' if bullying occurs. The school's motto of 'be kind, take pride and enjoy' is a constant reminder to pupils about how they should behave towards others. 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 using social media.

- By the end of Key Stage 2, pupils are confident speakers and are keen to share their work. They will listen to each other and respond to questions with appropriate answers.
- The school promotes pupils' spiritual, moral and social development well. Pupils are well cared for. They have confidence that they will receive the help and support they need if they experience any difficulties. Opportunities for pupils to appreciate other cultures are less well developed, which leaders have recognised. Plans are in place to strengthen this aspect. Nevertheless, pupils do know that they should show respect towards their peers and 'anyone who is different from us'.
- Parents appreciate the school's caring ethos and find the staff very helpful. They report that the headteacher 'has made many positive changes' and 'has listened to and sorted out anything we have queried'. Parents and pupils made a particular point of commenting on the headteacher's recent introduction of the new role in the school to strengthen pupil support and parent participation. This role is clearly having a positive impact on pupils' attendance and their readiness for learning.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. They conduct themselves well in and around the school and during play- and lunchtimes. They are kind and respectful to each other. For example, one child in the Reception Year class was heard saying to another boy, 'well done, you are doing really well today'.
- Incidents of poor behaviour are rare. Pupils are clear about whom to go to if they have a problem and are confident about the positive response they will get from all adults in the school.
- Adults consistently use the school's behaviour system and pupils understand what will happen if they do not behave well. The vast majority of parents spoken to during the inspection were very positive about pupils' behaviour, saying it is managed well by teachers and leaders. Parents who took the time to express their views on Parent View said that there is a lot of 'time, care and attention given to individual children' and that children 'are very happy here' in this 'friendly and welcoming' school.
- Pupils' attitudes to learning are largely good, even when learning is not as challenging for some pupils as it might be or when pupils are struggling with the work that teachers have set. On these occasions, pupils can become less attentive, but this does not occur routinely.
- The school's system for recording incidents of poor behaviour is very comprehensive, and followed up well by the headteacher and involving parents if the need arises.
- The school promotes regular attendance in a variety of ways, and as a result pupils' attendance is improving and they know that 'we have to come to school every day and be on time'. The recent introduction of a system for parents to drop their children off earlier in the school day has clearly made a difference in pupils arriving promptly and ready to start the school day.

Outcomes for pupils

require improvement

- Outcomes for pupils require improvement. At the end of Key Stage 2 in 2015, pupils' attainment in English grammar, punctuation and spelling was below the national average. The proportions of pupils achieving the higher levels in mathematics and reading were significantly below the national average.
- In 2015, the proportions of pupils making expected progress and those making better than expected progress in mathematics and reading by the end of Year 6 were below the national average.
- The majority of pupils in Key Stage 2 have experienced teaching that has not been consistently good throughout their time at the school. As a result, their progress has been too slow and there are considerable gaps in their knowledge and understanding, particularly in mathematics. The school's own assessment information and work in pupils' books shows that these gaps are closing. However, the present Year 6 pupils have some way to go to reach national expectations in both English and mathematics in 2016.
- Current information suggests that progress in reading and writing is better in the majority of classes. However, the school's own assessment information shows that not all pupils are making expected progress in mathematics.
- Pupils' attainment at the end of Key Stage 1 has risen over the last three years. It was above the national average in 2014 and 2015 because teaching has improved. The progress made by pupils from the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage to the end of Key Stage 1 is good.
- The proportion of pupils who achieved the expected level in the phonics check at the end of Year 1 in 2015 has been consistently above the national average for the last three years. This is because teaching of phonics is good and pupils use their phonic skills well in their reading. However, pupils do not read

widely and often and they say they would like to.

- In 2015, there were too few disadvantaged pupils eligible for the pupil premium in Year 6 to be able to comment on their achievement. The attainment of this group of pupils in Key Stage 1 was below that of their peers in school although above the national average for similar pupils. A large proportion of these pupils had additional needs but made considerable progress from their starting points. Current information suggests that this group's progress compares favourably with that of their classmates throughout the school.
- Evidence from the school's current assessment information, work in pupils' books and lesson observations indicates that expectations of the most-able pupils throughout the school are too low. Pupils, when asked how easy or hard the work they are given is, say it is 'middling – could be harder'. The headteacher has rightly prioritised this area in this year's improvement plan.
- The progress of pupils who speak English as an additional language, disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs compares favourably with that of their classmates. This is because they are given targeted support inside and outside the classroom, to which they respond very positively.

Early years provision is good

- Children enter the Reception Year class with skills below those typical for their age. The proportion of children reaching a good level of development has increased. In 2015, although this remained below the national average overall, those children who did not reach the level required still made significant progress from a very low baseline. The majority of children make good progress in communication and language, literacy and mathematics.
- Leaders have worked hard to improve provision in the early years. Most parents, including those with the very youngest children, have taken up the option of their children starting Reception Year in September. Inspection evidence confirms the school's own information, that those children who entered the Reception Year class in 2015 are making good progress.
- Children settle quickly and become self-confident in the well-resourced and stimulating environment. This is largely due to the very good liaison between the school, the playgroup and school-run parent and toddler group, 'Little Acorns'. Parents are very complimentary about the start their children make in the school. 'Coming to this toddler group and then to the playgroup has made my children very familiar with the school so they have settled really well in Reception. The support they get is amazing'.
- Teaching is good. Children are given many opportunities to explore ideas for themselves during the day. Consequently, children talk confidently about what they are doing and finding out. 'I'm collecting these rods to make a railway line – they are in a pattern,' said one boy. He then proceeded to tell inspectors how many rods he had of each colour and how many he would have left if he took the blue ones away. The range of activities is considerable and varied, both in the inside and outdoor areas. However, a few children do not sustain their interest in the activity they have chosen. This is sometimes due to additional adults not being clear about what the children are expected to do.
- The school's new system for recording children's development is being used well. The teacher has good knowledge of individuals as a result of a thorough baseline assessment. Activities are largely effective in supporting children's progress, although some of the most-able children are not challenged as well as they could be.
- Child protection and safeguarding arrangements are good. There are no breaches of welfare arrangements. Adults know the children well and there is strong evidence that they cater well for their individual needs. They ensure that children are safe and behave well.

School details

Unique reference number	124686
Local authority	Suffolk
Inspection number	10005537

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	Primary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	179
Appropriate authority	the governing body
Chair	Adrian Brett
Headteacher	Julie O'Neill
Telephone number	01787377089
Website	www.acton.suffolk.sch.uk
Email address	admin@acton.suffolk.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	10 February 2011

Information about this school

- This village school is smaller than the average-sized primary school. It became a full primary school in 2013 and numbers of pupils have increased considerably.
- Almost all pupils are of White British heritage and none is in the early stages of learning to speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils eligible for the pupil premium (which is additional government funding used to support pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals and children who are looked after) is below the national average.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is below the national average.
- In 2015, the school met the government's floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- Since the previous inspection, there have been considerable changes in staff, leaders and governors.
- An independent playgroup is accommodated on the school site. This is inspected separately.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed nine lessons, the majority of which were joint observations with the headteacher or a senior leader. In addition, inspectors made a number of shorter visits to lessons and attended an assembly.
- Inspectors heard some pupils read from Year 1 and Year 2.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher and senior leaders, staff, the Chair of the Governing Body and two governors, groups of pupils and a local authority representative.
- Inspectors examined a range of evidence, including the school's self-evaluation and development plan, the systems to track pupils' progress, policies, and records relating to behaviour and attendance. They also looked at records of the monitoring of teaching by senior staff, performance management information, safeguarding documentation and samples of pupils' work.
- The Parent View online survey responses of 18 parents were taken into account, as were letters from parents, and their views stated to inspectors during the school day.

Inspection team

Ruth Brock, Lead inspector

Simon Harbrow

Douglas Stroud

Her Majesty's Inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Raising concerns and making a complaint about Ofsted', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.gov.uk/government/publications/complaints-about-ofsted. If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.



You can use Parent View to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school. Ofsted will use the information parents and carers provide when deciding which schools to inspect and when and as part of the inspection.

You can also use Parent View to find out what other parents and carers think about schools in England. You can visit www.parentview.ofsted.gov.uk, or look for the link on the main Ofsted website: www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ofsted.

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

This publication is available at www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ofsted.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 4234
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.ofsted.gov.uk

© Crown copyright 2015

