

Kirby Primary Academy

Halstead Road, Kirby Cross, Frinton-on-Sea, Essex CO13 0LW

Inspection dates

27–28 September 2016

Overall effectiveness	Requires improvement
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Requires improvement
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Requires improvement
Early years provision	Requires improvement
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- Pupils do not make good progress across a wide range of subjects other than English and mathematics.
- Pupils do not make all the progress they could in writing because they are not sufficiently challenged to extend the length and content of their writing.
- Some teachers' expectations of how hard pupils should work and how hard they should try are not high enough.
- Some of the most able pupils do not make as much progress as they could because the tasks they are given are not always sufficiently challenging.

The school has the following strengths

- Kirby Primary Academy has improved enormously since its predecessor school was inspected and found to be inadequate in 2013.
- The new headteacher has a very clear vision for how the school will become good and she is tireless in her efforts to achieve it.
- Pupils now make good progress in reading, writing and mathematics throughout the school.
- Pupils' behaviour has improved enormously as a result of the measures put in place to address previous very poor behaviour. The school is now a calm and orderly place where pupils' behaviour is managed effectively.
- The quality of teaching has improved as a result of the headteacher's insistence on high standards. She has not shied away from making difficult decisions when necessary.
- The multi-academy trust provides good support and challenge to the academy. The wide range of professional development opportunities it provides has had a clear impact on improving the quality of teaching in the school.
- Practices around the safer recruitment of staff have been strengthened since the headteacher took up her post. All statutory safeguarding requirements are met.
- Pupils feel safe at school and bullying is rare.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching so that more pupils make rapid progress, particularly in writing, by:
 - providing pupils with more opportunities to write at length
 - ensuring that the most able pupils are challenged sufficiently by the work that they are given
 - ensuring that teachers have consistently high expectations of how hard pupils should try and how hard they should work.
- Ensure that pupils make good progress across a wide range of subjects by:
 - continuing to develop the quality of the curriculum offered to pupils
 - taking advantage of opportunities for pupils to write in subjects other than English
 - developing an effective method of assessing and tracking pupils' progress in subjects other than English and mathematics.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- The headteacher is passionate in her drive to improve the school. Her resilience, clear vision and sheer determination have taken a failing school and placed it firmly on the road to recovery. She does not shy away from difficult decisions and is not afraid to tackle poor teaching or other staffing issues when necessary. The headteacher's impact on improving this school is very clear.
- The headteacher and deputy headteacher have formed a strong partnership in the year that they have worked together. They share the same ambition for the school and are working successfully towards achieving it.
- Many pupils displayed poor attitudes and extremely poor behaviour at the point that the headteacher joined the school, having lost trust in the school's leaders and the likelihood that staff would stay for any length of time. The headteacher described to inspectors how one pupil meeting her for the first time said, 'We will make you cry and we will make you leave,' demonstrating clearly pupils' disaffection with school life. The calm, peaceful, happy school that exists today is very far removed from the extremely unhappy one of such a short time ago.
- The quality of teaching in the school has improved as a result of the headteacher's tireless drive to improve standards and her determination to create a stable staff team. She and the deputy headteacher have a clear focus on improving the quality of teaching throughout the school and they ensure that appropriate support is put in place when necessary to help teachers to improve their teaching.
- A shortage of high-quality teaching staff has increased the school's difficulty in improving the quality of teaching. The school has been well supported by the multi-academy trust (the trust) to recruit high-calibre members of staff. For example, the trust has enabled the school to have access to trainee and newly qualified teachers that it might not otherwise have had.
- The vast majority of parents are highly supportive of the school. In their written responses, many parents recognised the considerable improvements that have taken place and many singled out the headteacher for particular praise. For example, one parent said, 'The school has gone from strength to strength in the last few years,' and another said, 'This school has been totally turned around by the current leadership.'
- The school's reputation in the local area has improved and the number of pupils registered at the school has risen so that it is now at its full capacity. One parent summed up the school's improved reputation by saying, 'Kirby was the only school able to offer my daughter a place. I was really disappointed at the time as the school had a poor reputation and even poorer Ofsted inspection results but I am so pleased to say that my concerns were completely unnecessary.'
- The vast majority of pupils are of White British heritage, almost all pupils speak English as their first language and few pupils belong to religions other than Christianity. The school is very successful in ensuring that pupils develop good attitudes to those whose ethnic background, language or religion is different to their own. Pupils are accepting and welcoming, and understand well the diversity of modern British society.
- Pupils' attitudes to other protected characteristics are less well developed. Although in no way hostile in their attitudes to homosexuality, pupils were less sure that gay

people would be treated well by others at the school and some said that they thought people might be teased for being gay or having gay parents. In a meeting with the lead inspector, pupils were unsure whether it was appropriate to say the word 'lesbian' as they were concerned that it might be a 'rude word'. Some pupils said that the word 'gay' is sometimes used as an insult in the school. The school's leaders are already taking action to address this.

- The pupil premium grant is spent effectively to ensure that disadvantaged pupils make good progress. The funding is used in a range of ways such as to provide support for pupils' speech and language development and to provide access to extra-curricular activities. The school monitors closely the progress that this group of pupils make and how effectively the money is spent.
- The primary physical education and sports grant is spent effectively. The funding is used towards the cost of employing a part-time sports coach. This has broadened the range of sports that are taught at the school. For example, pupils now enjoy karate and basketball. The number of clubs that are offered to pupils has increased and take-up of places at these clubs is high.
- Leadership below the headteacher and deputy headteacher is underdeveloped. Although some areas are led by others, such as numeracy, literacy and provision for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, too many areas are still carried by the headteacher and deputy headteacher. The school is well aware of this and plans are in place to continue to develop leadership within the school.
- The school's leaders have rightly focused on tackling behaviour, alongside outcomes in English and mathematics, before developing the curriculum more widely. As a result, pupils do not yet make good progress across a wide range of subjects.
- The school teaches all national curriculum subjects, with the exception of modern foreign languages. The deputy headteacher has spoken to pupils about their interests, likes and dislikes in learning. This information has been used to plan the beginnings of a new curriculum for the school, and staff are in the process of developing the curriculum further.

Governance of the school

- The school's governing body is effective in holding the school's leaders to account and in providing them with support. They know the school well and visit frequently. This enables them to ask the right questions and to understand the answers that they are given.
- Governors use a variety of sources to check the information that they are given by the school's leaders. This gives them appropriate confidence in their judgements about the strengths of the school and the areas that require development.
- The trust provides good support to the school. For example, the trust provides a wide range of continuing professional development opportunities for staff both in the form of courses and more 'hands-on' approaches, such as coaching. The impact of this is clear in the improvements in teaching and outcomes in the school.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- The school's single central record of employment checks meets statutory requirements. Personnel files are orderly and well kept. It is clear that safer recruitment processes have been strengthened since the current headteacher took up her post. For example, the school now uses a standard form when references are requested, in order to

ensure that referees are asked the right questions about the suitability of candidates to work with children.

- The designated safeguarding lead and her deputy are appropriately trained to carry out the role. The designated safeguarding lead is highly committed to ensuring pupils' safety and protecting their welfare. She knows the right action to take and records show that she has done so in a timely fashion.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- Not all teachers have high enough expectations of pupils in terms of how hard they expect them to work and how hard they expect them to try. In some classes, pupils could achieve more if they were encouraged to try harder and to do their best with every piece of work.
- Progress in writing is weaker than in reading and mathematics. Pupils seldom write at length and this limits the progress that they make. The curriculum is not yet sufficiently well developed for teachers to exploit opportunities for pupils to practise their writing skills in a range of subjects.
- The most able pupils are not sufficiently challenged and stretched to ensure that they make the best progress that they can. Teachers plan work to meet the needs of different pupils but some work is too easy for the most able pupils. When this is the case, the most able pupils do not make the rapid progress that they could because expectations are too low.
- Although the school is generally well resourced, the teaching of computing is restricted by a lack of hardware. The school has one half-class set of laptop computers to be used throughout the school. This limits the frequency with which computing can be taught as a discrete subject or used as a resource during teaching in other subjects.
- Relationships in the school are strong. The staff know pupils well and understand their individual needs and interests. Teachers and teaching assistants work well together as teams and this provides pupils with consistent expectations in terms of what is expected of their work and their behaviour.
- Teaching assistants support pupils well, particularly pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. They work closely with teachers to ensure that the needs of individual pupils are met. For example, where pupils have specific issues with managing their own behaviour, teaching assistants are skilled at adapting the task and responding appropriately to ensure that pupils remain involved in the lesson and to diffuse a potential outburst.
- Teachers use open-ended questions well to encourage pupils to think more deeply and to assess their learning.
- The school's focus on developing the quality of the learning environment is clearly evident. Throughout the school, high-quality displays provide interest and promote high standards through the display of pupils' best work.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.

- Pupils are developing better attitudes to school and to learning. School staff place an appropriate emphasis on encouraging good learning behaviours. For example, during the inspection the headteacher used an assembly to teach pupils not to be afraid of getting things wrong and to understand that we learn through mistakes. This message was later seen being reinforced during lessons by class teachers.
- Pupils enjoy school and are increasingly proud of it. They play well together and enjoy each other's company. The playground is a happy place where pupils have fun and play active games under the supervision of staff.
- Pupils feel safe at school. The vast majority say that bullying is something that hardly ever happens and that they know that staff would help them if they were ever subject to bullying. The school's records confirm this and show that appropriate action is taken when incidents do occur.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Although there are still occasions where individual pupils' behaviour does not meet the school's high standards, the vast majority of pupils, for the vast majority of the time, behave well. This is an enormous improvement and something of which the school's leaders are rightly proud.
- The school monitors pupils' attendance very closely. A range of measures is in place to reward and encourage good attendance. Absence is carefully tracked and appropriate steps are taken when pupils' attendance falls below particular levels. As a result, attendance for all groups of pupils is now at least in line with the national average.
- Until recently, attendance levels were below the national average, with disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities having particularly poor attendance.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- There is limited evidence of the progress that pupils make in subjects other than English and mathematics. Although it is clear that pupils make progress in subjects such as music and history, progress across all year groups in a wide range of subjects is not yet consistently strong. Staff do not yet monitor and track pupils' progress in other subjects well enough to have a comprehensive understanding of how well they are doing. The most able pupils do not achieve as well as they should. Only a fifth of previously high-attaining pupils reached the higher standard in reading, writing and mathematics in the key stage 2 national tests this year.
- Pupils make good progress in learning phonics. The proportion of pupils who reached the expected level in the Year 1 phonics screening check was similar to the national average in 2015 and rose again in 2016 so that four out of five pupils reached the expected level.
- Pupils' attainment at the end of key stage 1 was well below the national average in 2015 and particularly weak in reading. Pupils are now making good progress in key stage 1. Almost three-quarters of pupils achieved the expected standard at the end of Year 2 in 2016. When this group of pupils left early years, only half of them had achieved a good level of development. This shows that many pupils made rapid progress during key stage 1.
- Attainment at the end of key stage 2 has improved. In 2015, the attainment of Year 6 pupils in reading, writing and mathematics was well below the national average. This

year the proportion of pupils who achieved the expected level in each of reading, writing and mathematics was similar to the national average.

- Similarly, in 2015 pupils made far less progress between key stage 1 and key stage 2 than the national average. This year, pupils also made similar progress to other pupils nationally in each of the three subjects. Although the method of assessment changed between 2015 and 2016, making direct comparison of results impossible, the difference in terms of the school's relationship to the national average shows a very clear improvement.
- The school's assessment information shows that pupils make good progress, particularly in reading and mathematics. The work in pupils' exercise books shows that pupils do not make all the progress they could in writing because they seldom write freely or at length.
- Pupils read fluently and understand the texts that they read. Where words are unfamiliar, pupils use their phonics skills to sound them out and then read them.
- Disadvantaged pupils make good progress because they are well supported. Outcomes for this group of pupils are rising as outcomes across the school rise. The pupil premium grant is spent effectively to improve outcomes for disadvantaged pupils.
- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress from their individual starting points. They are supported effectively by well-trained and committed teaching assistants. The special educational needs coordinator knows this group of pupils well and is effective in ensuring that their individual needs are met.

Early years provision

Requires improvement

- Children make slower progress in developing their early writing skills than they do in other areas of the early years curriculum. Children are given too few opportunities to develop their writing skills and phonics teaching is not fully effective in promoting children's writing development.
- Some staff are more successful at managing children's behaviour, and have higher expectations, than others. As a result, there is some low-level disruption that sometimes affects the learning of others.
- Children settle quickly into life in the Reception class. Already, so early in the academic year, the children play happily alongside each other and the vast majority already know and follow the school's rules and routines.
- Children enter the school with skills and abilities that are broadly typical of their age. The proportion of children who achieved a good level of development by the end of the Reception Year has improved. There has been a clear upward trend over the last three years. Children are now much better prepared for life in Year 1.
- Staff have worked hard to improve the quality of the early years provision. The learning environment is well resourced, with activities planned across the areas of learning. Staff pay careful attention to children's interests and plan activities in response to them. Resources are organised well so that children can access them independently. The large outdoor space is used increasingly well as staff continue to develop this provision.
- The development of children's communication, speech and language skills is increasingly a strength. Staff are fully aware of the need to support children's language development by, for example, modelling grammar and encouraging use of a wider

vocabulary and do so effectively.

- Early years is led well. The early years teacher works closely with the headteacher and deputy headteacher to develop the provision. Between them, they have a thorough understanding of the provision's strengths and weaknesses. It is clear that leaders have focused on the right areas and that the early years class is developing well as a result.

School details

Unique reference number	139806
Local authority	Essex
Inspection number	10019583

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	209
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Damian Williams
Headteacher	Alison Grigg
Telephone number	01255 674 056
Website	www.kirbyps.org.uk
Email address	admin@kirby-le-soken.essex.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.
- The school complies with DfE guidance on what academies should publish.
- The school opened as an academy on 1 October 2013, sponsored by the REAch2 Academy Trust. The academy's predecessor school was judged to require special measures when it was inspected in February 2013.
- The headteacher joined the school as deputy headteacher in September 2014 and, after a brief period as acting headteacher, became the substantive headteacher in April 2015. The deputy headteacher joined the school in September 2015.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils is slightly above the national average and levels of deprivation are slightly higher than typically found nationally.
- Very few pupils are from minority ethnic backgrounds and almost all pupils speak English as their first or only language.

- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is similar to the national average.
- In 2015, the school did not meet the government's floor standards which set the minimum standards for attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors gathered a range of evidence to judge the quality of teaching and learning over time. Inspectors observed parts of 13 lessons, some jointly with the headteacher or deputy headteacher.
- Inspectors looked closely at the work in pupils' exercise books, listened to them read and talked to them about their work.
- Inspectors scrutinised the school's assessment information, records of leaders' monitoring of the quality of teaching and learning in the school, and a range of other school documents.
- Meetings were held with pupils, staff, governors, and two representatives of the multi-academy trust.
- Inspectors took into account the view of the 58 parents who responded to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, and the 54 free-text responses. An inspector also spoke with parents as they brought their children to school.
- Inspectors were aware during this inspection of a qualifying complaint that had been made about the school. While Ofsted does not have the power to investigate incidents of this kind, actions taken by the school in response to the incident were considered alongside the other evidence available at the time of the inspection to inform inspectors' judgements.

Inspection team

Wendy Varney, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Sue Cox

Ofsted Inspector

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