

# Southminster Church of England (Controlled) Primary School

Burnham Road, Southminster, Essex CM0 7ES

## Inspection dates

12–13 October 2016

| Overall effectiveness                        | Inadequate                  |
|--|-----------------------------|
| Effectiveness of leadership and management   | <b>Requires improvement</b> |
| Quality of teaching, learning and assessment | <b>Inadequate</b>           |
| Personal development, behaviour and welfare  | <b>Inadequate</b>           |
| Outcomes for pupils                          | <b>Inadequate</b>           |
| Early years provision                        | <b>Inadequate</b>           |
| Overall effectiveness at previous inspection | Requires improvement        |

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is an inadequate school

- Although improved, leaders and governors have not ensured that the arrangements to safeguard pupils are consistently effective. Systems for the safer recruitment of staff have not been sufficiently robust.
- Leaders and governors have not ensured that the areas for development that were evident at the previous inspection have been tackled quickly enough until six months ago.
- Children do not make good enough progress in the early years class. Teaching is not matched well enough to the needs of very young children.
- Pupils do not make good enough progress in key stage 1. No pupils reached the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics in 2016.
- Phonics is not taught well. The proportion of pupils who reached the expected level in the Year 1 phonics screening check in 2016 was very low.
- Pupils do not make good enough progress during their time at the school. The proportion who leave key stage 2 at the expected level is well below the national average.
- Teachers do not assess pupils' progress accurately enough or plan effectively to meet pupils' individual needs.
- Lessons are frequently disturbed by low-level disruption and sometimes by more serious behavioural incidents. Teachers' expectations of how pupils should behave are not high enough.

### The school has the following strengths

- The interim executive headteacher has a clear and accurate understanding of the school's current position and is taking effective action to address its weaknesses.
- The chief executive of the trust provides good support and is taking decisive action where necessary.
- There are early signs of improved teaching, and subsequent improvements in pupils' outcomes, in some parts of the school.
- The school's partnership with a local school has increased its leadership capacity and its ability to support improvements in the quality of teaching.

## Full report

In accordance with section 44(2) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires significant improvement, because it is performing significantly less well than it might in all the circumstances reasonably be expected to perform.

### What does the school need to do to improve further?

- As a matter of urgency, make safeguarding fully effective by ensuring that:
  - the school's single central record of employment checks meets statutory requirements
  - recruitment processes are sufficiently robust and statutory guidance around the safer recruitment of staff is followed closely.
- Improve the quality of teaching, by:
  - raising teachers' expectations of how pupils should behave and what they can achieve
  - sharing the good practice that is starting to develop in some parts of the school
  - ensuring that teachers plan learning and tasks that match pupils' abilities closely
  - improving the accuracy of assessment so that it becomes a key tool for planning pupils' next steps and for tracking their progress.
- Improve outcomes so that pupils make good progress throughout the school and attain at least in line with national levels by the end of key stage 2 by ensuring that:
  - the pupil premium grant is spent effectively to ensure that disadvantaged pupils make rapid progress
  - the most able pupils, including the most able disadvantaged pupils, are sufficiently stretched and challenged
  - the progress that all pupils make is tracked regularly and prompt action is taken when pupils fail to make the progress they should.
- Improve behaviour throughout the school so that lessons are very rarely disrupted and pupils behave well during less structured parts of the day, by:
  - raising expectations of how pupils should behave
  - devising an effective behaviour management system that is employed effectively and consistently throughout the school.

An external review of governance should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

An external review of the school's use of the pupil premium should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management

### Requires improvement

- Until recently, leaders and governors have not taken effective action to address the areas for improvement that existed at the time of the previous inspection. The quality of teaching has declined over time and this decline demonstrates clearly the weaknesses in leadership and management over time.
- The multi-academy trust ('the trust'), until recently, had not taken effective action to halt the school's decline. Trustees allowed the poor quality of teaching and learning, and resulting poor outcomes, to continue because they did not ensure that the school was being well led and managed.
- The pupil premium grant has not been spent effectively. Leaders have not monitored the progress of disadvantaged pupils closely and they have not used the additional funding available to benefit this group of pupils. Until recently, much of the funding remained unspent while disadvantaged pupils continued to underachieve.
- Funding for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities has not been spent effectively. Leaders have not monitored the progress of this group of pupils well enough and, as a result, they do not make good enough progress.
- The primary physical education and sport premium has not been used effectively. The funding has not been spent and, until very recently, there were no plans for how the funding would be used. It is, therefore, yet to have any impact on the pupils in the school.
- Many parents express negative opinions about the school, including about: the unsuitability of having a part-time headteacher, poor communication, poor behaviour and frequent changes of teachers. The school has addressed the first issue by appointing a full-time head of school to start after the half-term holiday.
- Parents' concerns about behaviour and changes of teacher are reasonable. Only 38% of the parents who responded to Parent View, Ofsted's online survey, said that they would recommend the school to others.
- The school's website does not meet guidelines for what academies should publish. Some information is missing and some is out of date. For example, the website does not provide up-to-date information on the school's curriculum by subject or by year group. The deficiencies in the school's website confirm parents' concerns about communication.
- The school's work to develop pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is underdeveloped. The interim executive headteacher is aware that this aspect of the school needs further work and has planned an audit of current provision in order to make sure that action plans address the most important areas first.
- The school's curriculum is appropriately broad and balanced, covering all the subjects in the national curriculum. However, it is not rich and exciting enough to promote a love of learning in pupils and to encourage them to do their best.
- The school's work to promote equality and tolerance is an area of strength. Pupils show

good attitudes to people with protected characteristics, including gay and transsexual people. One pupil summed up the thoughts of many by saying, 'everyone should be treated the same'. Another commented that pupils are taught that it is 'God's rule' to treat everyone equally.

- The leadership and management of the school have greatly improved since the interim executive headteacher took the role in April 2016. The positive impact of the interim executive headteacher is clear. She has very quickly gained a clear view of the school's weaknesses and has taken prompt and decisive action to tackle them. As a result, the school is now beginning to show the first 'green shoots' of improvement.
- The new chief executive of the trust has a very realistic understanding of the school's current position. On coming to the post in May 2016, he took decisive action to improve the quality of leadership and management in the school. The trust has further strengthened leadership capacity by appointing a full-time, non-teaching head of school.
- Leadership roles and responsibilities are starting to develop across the school. For example, there is now a much clearer plan for the development of mathematics and there is evidence that regular monitoring is starting to have an impact on the quality of teaching in some parts of the school.
- The school's recent informal partnership with a local school is already proving to be helpful. The school is benefiting from shared leadership arrangements, shared staff development opportunities, and the chance to work and plan with colleagues teaching the same year group.
- The quality of teaching and learning has been monitored much more closely since the interim executive headteacher joined the school. This has ensured that a range of monitoring activity, such as observing lessons and checking the work in pupils' exercise books, happens regularly and that it improves pupils' learning. This is because each monitoring activity is focused on improving the quality of teaching and improvements are starting to be seen.
- A number of parents expressed positive views about the school. Several described the improvements since the interim executive headteacher joined the school. One parent commented that 'Since the introduction of a new headteacher the school appears to be going from strength to strength'. Another said that, 'I have always found it to be a warm and supportive environment where children are helpful, well mannered, and above all, happy'.

### **Governance of the school**

- Governors have not held leaders to account effectively. They have allowed the school to deteriorate over time and have not ensured that the areas that required improvement have been addressed.
- Few governors have experience in their roles. Almost all have joined the governing body within the last couple of years and they have not had experience of governance elsewhere.
- The lack of experience in the governing body has severely limited the knowledge and skills within it. Governors are transparently honest about their limitations as a

governing body and their inability to hold the school's leaders to account.

- Governors now have a very accurate understanding of where the school is, in terms of its strengths and weaknesses. Minutes of governing body meetings show that governors have recently started to challenge the school's leaders more, rather than accepting what they are told on face value.

## Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding pupils have not been effective over time. Leaders had not ensured that all the necessary pre-employment checks were carried out prior to new members of staff being allowed to start work. Staff had been allowed to take up their positions without checks being completed or references obtained. No risk assessments were carried out and no additional measures put in place to ensure pupils' safety until the checks are completed. The interim executive headteacher took prompt and decisive action to address these issues as soon as they were discovered.
- The single central record of pre-employment checks does not meet statutory requirements. The record shows that Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks have not been obtained for all staff. The single central record does not show that the required further check on people who have lived or worked outside the United Kingdom are made when necessary.
- Child protection records have not been kept securely in the past. The school's current leaders have only been able to locate a very small number of child protection files and concerns. It is not clear if the records that are currently available accurately represent all the concerns that have been, or should have been, reported to senior staff throughout the life of the school.
- The interim executive headteacher has begun to improve safeguarding practices. A safeguarding audit had already been booked, prior to this inspection, in order that the interim executive headteacher could be certain that all necessary measures are in place. She has introduced a new and robust system for recording and tracking child protection concerns. The school's most recent child protection files are suitably kept and fit for purpose.
- The interim executive headteacher has updated the school's safeguarding policy to ensure that it reflects the most recent changes to statutory guidance. She and the head of school have provided training for all staff and for people who volunteer to help at the school. As a result, staff have a good understanding of current safeguarding issues and procedures.

## Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

### Inadequate

- Teachers' assessments of pupils' attainment are inaccurate. Although records have been kept to show pupils' attainment, these are based on assessments that are not rigorous and are thus unreliable. This is demonstrated very clearly by the school's predictions for results in 2016 and the school's actual results.
- In every measure, from the Reception Year through to Year 6, predictions were wildly exaggerated in comparison to the actual results. The predicted result of the Year 1

phonics screening check was almost four times better than the actual result.

- Too much of the teaching in the school is weak. This is evident in observations of classroom practice, assessment information and the work in pupils' exercise books. Pupils' work shows many pupils are working below the level expected for their age, and are making too little progress, as a result of low expectations and poor teaching over an extended period of time.
- Teachers do not always have sufficient subject knowledge to enable them to teach areas of the curriculum effectively. For example, a lack of knowledge in teaching phonics means that pupils have not been given the skills they need in order to reach the expected standard in line with their peers across the country.
- Tasks are often not well chosen to meet pupils' needs and to help them to consolidate and practise what they have been taught. There is often a lack of clarity about what teachers want pupils to learn, which limits what pupils achieve.
- Pupils' learning is frequently disrupted by other pupils' behaviour. Teachers do not use behaviour management strategies effectively enough. Sanctions and rewards are not used consistently throughout the school.
- The most able pupils are not provided with sufficient stretch and challenge. Teachers' expectations of what this group of pupils could and should achieve are not high enough. Teachers are not sufficiently aware of who the most able disadvantaged pupils are and do not plan well enough to ensure that these pupils make rapid progress.
- The interim executive headteacher has begun to address some of the weaknesses in teaching and, as a result, there are some very early signs of stronger teaching starting to emerge. Where this is the case, pupils' work shows more care and there is already clear evidence of better progress since September 2016.
- Where teaching is improving, teachers' expectations are high in terms of what they expect pupils to achieve and how they expect them to behave. Pupils are encouraged to, and expected to, show pride in their work and are starting to do so as a result.
- In some classes, teachers provide pupils with clear and accurate feedback that is starting to have an impact on improving the quality of their work and ensuring that they make more rapid progress.

## Personal development, behaviour and welfare

## Inadequate

### Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is inadequate. The school's leaders and governors have not ensured that systems to safeguard pupils are robust and that statutory safeguarding requirements are met.
- Pupils enjoy school and say that they are happy at Southminster. Pupils say that the school is improving and that the school is 'better now with the new headteacher'.
- Pupils are polite, friendly and well mannered. They are welcoming to visitors and keen to talk about their school and their learning.
- Pupils generally feel safe at school. They say that there is some bullying but that it

stops quickly when you tell a teacher. In a meeting with the lead inspector, pupils said that there is far less bullying since the interim executive headteacher took up her post. One pupil said that 'she doesn't stop until it's sorted out'.

## Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is inadequate.
- Pupils describe frequent low-level disruption in lessons. They say that pupils frequently talk over the teacher and distract each other, wasting valuable learning time. This was clearly evident during the inspection. Pupils also say that there is a lot of rough play in the playground and this sometimes makes them feel less safe.
- In the past, the school's response to incidents of very challenging behaviour was to contact parents and ask them to take their child home. Pupils' absence would then be recorded as 'C' (meaning 'leave of absence authorised by the school') in the register. This amounts to illegal exclusion and, until very recently, was common practice at the school.
- Since taking up the post, the interim executive headteacher has used fixed-term exclusion on a handful of occasions as the ultimate consequence of unacceptable behaviour. Proper records have been kept on each occasion and the reason for the absence recorded accurately in the school's register.
- Attendance is improving and is currently similar to the national average. The school's leaders monitor pupils' attendance closely and take action to tackle absence when appropriate. Leaders have tackled the persistent absence of some pupils very effectively and their attendance has improved as a result.

## Outcomes for pupils

### Inadequate

- Outcomes for pupils are poor and, until very recently, have shown little sign of improving. Children enter the school with skills and abilities that are broadly typical of their age. In 2016, just over a third of pupils achieved the expected level in the key stage 2 national tests. Pupils do not make the progress that they should over time.
- Phonics is not taught well enough. The proportion of Year 1 pupils who reached the expected level in the phonics screening check in 2016 was extremely low, approximately a quarter of the national average.
- Pupils' attainment at the end of key stage 1 was entirely inadequate in 2016. Not a single pupil attained the expected level in each of reading, writing and mathematics. This compares very poorly with national averages.
- Disadvantaged pupils do not achieve well. As is the case throughout the school, they make poor progress because the quality of teaching is not good enough. The pupil premium grant has not been spent effectively and leaders have not tracked the progress of this group thoroughly enough.
- The most able pupils do not attain highly enough and do not make good progress. None of the pupils who attained the higher levels at the end of key stage 1 reached the higher standard in reading, writing and mathematics in the national tests at the end of key stage 2 in 2016.

- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities make the same poor progress as their peers. This is because, until very recently, their progress has not been monitored closely enough and teaching has not met their individual needs well enough.
- Pupils' exercise books reflect the weak outcomes evident in assessment information from the national tests. Pupils' books are lacking in terms of quality and quantity. Expectations have been too low over an extended period of time and this is reflected fully in the work that pupils produce.
- Since the beginning of this academic year, the work in pupils' books in some classes shows that pupils are starting to make better progress. Although attainment in these classes continues to lag behind what would normally be expected for their age, it is evident that pupils are starting to make more rapid progress in order to catch up.
- Strengths are starting to emerge in some subjects other than English and mathematics. For example, there is clear evidence of pupils achieving at an appropriate level in art and design, and in computing.

### Early years provision

### Inadequate

- Children do not make good progress during their time in the early years. Children enter the Reception class with skills and abilities that are broadly typical of their age. The proportion who reached a good level of development in 2016 was well below the national average.
- Children's behaviour is not managed well enough in the early years. Children have not yet learned the school's rules and often behave inappropriately. This is partly because behaviour is not managed consistently and partly because expectations for how they should behave are not high enough.
- Teaching is not always suited to the needs of very young children. Tasks are not well matched to children's needs and interests. Sometimes, activities are not sufficiently well supervised to encourage children to learn as intended. Children often simply explore the resources on offer.
- The interim executive headteacher has a clear understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the early years provision. She has recently introduced a new curriculum to support teachers to plan more effectively for this age group.
- The early years classroom is bright, attractive and well organised. The classroom offers an appropriately wide variety of resources that children are able to access independently. The outdoor space is of a good size and offers children the opportunity to partake in a range of mainly physical activities.
- The children are happy in the early years classroom and enjoy coming to school.



## School details

|                         |          |
|-------------------------|----------|
| Unique reference number | 140180   |
| Local authority         | Essex    |
| Inspection number       | 10022932 |

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 | 180  |
| Appropriate authority               | The governing body   |
| Chair                               | Hazel Gillett  |
| Interim executive headteacher       | Pauline Ward   |
| Telephone number                    | 01621 772409   |
| Website                             | <a href="http://www.southminster.essex.sch.uk">www.southminster.essex.sch.uk</a>     |
| Email address                       | <a href="mailto:admin@southminster.essex.sch.uk">admin@southminster.essex.sch.uk</a> |
| Date of previous inspection         | 8–9 July 2015  |

## Information about this school

- The school does not meet requirements on the publication of information about: pupils' attainment and progress at the end of key stage 2; the school's curriculum; special educational needs and/or disabilities; and annual reports and accounts.
- The school does not comply with Department for Education guidance on what academies should publish.
- Southminster Church of England Primary School converted to become an academy on 1 November 2013. It is sponsored by The Diocese of Chelmsford Vine Schools Trust.
- The previous headteacher left the school at the end of the summer term 2016 following a period of absence. The interim executive headteacher joined the school, part-time in April 2016, initially on a short-term basis. The interim executive headteacher took long-term responsibility for the school from the beginning of the current academic year.

- Southminster is an averaged-sized primary school with one class per year group from Reception to Year 6.
- Almost all pupils are of White British origin and almost all speak English as their first language.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils is similar to the national average.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is similar to the national average.
- The school met floor standard in 2015. These are the minimum expectations, set by the government, for pupils' attainment and progress.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors gathered a range of evidence to judge the quality of teaching and learning over time. Inspectors observed parts of 21 lessons, some jointly with the interim executive headteacher.
- Inspectors looked closely at the work in pupils' current exercise books and in books retained from the previous academic year. Inspectors listened to pupils read and talked to them about their work.
- Inspectors looked at the school's assessment information, records of leaders' monitoring of the quality of teaching, and a range of other documents.
- The views of parents were taken into account, including the 39 responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, and conversations with parents at the beginning of the school day. Inspectors also took account of the 11 responses to Ofsted's staff survey.
- Meetings were held with pupils, staff, the executive headteacher, the head of school, other leaders, the chief executive of the trust, and a group of governors.

## Inspection team

|                              |                         |
|------------------------------|-------------------------|
| Wendy Varney, lead inspector | Her Majesty's Inspector |
| Cindy Impey                  | Her Majesty's Inspector |
| Fiona Webb                   | Her Majesty's Inspector |

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