

Katherines Primary School

Brookside, Harlow, Essex CM19 5NJ

Inspection dates

12–13 October 2016

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an inadequate school

- Safeguarding is ineffective because governors have not ensured that the risk assessments in place to safeguard pupils are fit for purpose.
- The school has not been thorough enough in carrying out pre-appointment employment checks for members of staff.

The school has the following strengths

- Support and challenge from the headteacher, other school leaders and the governing body have secured good improvements to the quality of teaching and in outcomes for pupils since the previous inspection.
- Attainment in English and mathematics is rising. It was broadly average by the end of Year 6 in 2016, reflecting the good progress that different groups of pupils make from their starting points.
- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good. Teachers plan engaging tasks which enable pupils to learn effectively.
- Mathematics is taught well. Teachers have high expectations of pupils when they are reading and writing. The teaching of spelling and phonics is less effective.
- Children make good progress in the Nursery and Reception classes. Adults work together well to support children's academic and social development.
- Pupils behave well. They are polite, courteous and say that they feel safe. They are keen to succeed and take pride in their achievements.
- The broad and balanced curriculum provides rich learning experiences across a range of subjects.
- Leaders check outcomes rigorously. They have a clear understanding of most of the school's strengths and weaknesses.

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?

- Improve arrangements for safeguarding pupils by ensuring that:
 - the governing body and other school leaders have systems in place to check that vetting arrangements for staff are always rigorous
 - when risk assessments are necessary, that leaders and governors clearly identify the risks associated with an event or circumstance so that all hazards are fully considered, assessed and mitigated.
- Improve the teaching of spelling and phonics by:
 - ensuring that teachers always expect enough of pupils and introduce skills systematically
 - ensuring that feedback to pupils helps them to recognise spelling errors so that they are not repeated.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Inadequate

- Leadership is inadequate because safeguarding is ineffective. Leaders and governors have not adequately considered, assessed and mitigated all possible risks to pupils' safety.
- Neither the governing body nor senior leaders have ensured that the school has consistently carried out the right sorts of pre-employment checks for newly appointed staff. Although procedures have improved, checks are not thorough enough.
- Risk assessments are inadequate because they do not identify the risks that given circumstances present. Although precautions are identified, they are not always specific enough. This means that staff and governors do not know the possible risks to pupils and do not do everything possible to lower or remove them. Although the school has completed a wide range of risk assessment forms, there is a lack of understanding of the process and purpose of risk assessment.
- Aside from the ineffective arrangements for safeguarding pupils, leaders have secured good improvement since the previous inspection. The headteacher has ensured that there is a clear sense of purpose to school improvement. Development planning is focused on the right priorities and is securing good improvement. Support from the local authority and the Harlow Educational Partnership has played an important role in improving the quality of teaching and outcomes for pupils over the last two years.
- The headteacher is supported well by other leaders. The deputy headteacher and other leaders have shown strong commitment to improving pupils' learning. Together, they have established a good track record for improving teaching since the previous inspection. Teachers are monitored regularly and set challenging targets to help them improve further. Minor inconsistencies in provision such as the application of the marking policy to improve pupils' spelling have already been identified and feature in development plans.
- A new special educational needs coordinator has quickly got to grips with this aspect of the school's work. He has made a good start to checking provision for himself and has prepared thorough reports for governors on the effectiveness of support. He has taken rapid action to improve the management of behaviour and these actions are already having a clear impact.
- Staff welcome challenge and support and willingly take on new ideas that help to improve outcomes for pupils. For example, teachers are very excited about a new phonics scheme that has been purchased because they feel it will help them to introduce skills more systematically.
- Pupil premium funding to support disadvantaged pupils is used effectively. Disadvantaged pupils are supported well, both personally and academically, enabling them to be successful and be part of everything the school has to offer.
- Good use is made of the extra funding available to promote and extend the range and quality of physical education and extra-curricular sporting activities provided by the school. There are regular opportunities for pupils to be involved in sports competitions

with other local schools. Sports coaches visit school regularly to offer activities and to improve the skills of teachers.

- Leaders ensure that the curriculum is broad and balanced and that it meets statutory requirements. There are a good number of clubs and visits that contribute well to pupils' enjoyment of school. Curriculum leaders are a significant strength. They work collaboratively with each other to analyse the progress pupils make and to continually improve teaching in different subjects. This enables them to develop a strong shared understanding of how well pupils are achieving in all subjects, not just in English and mathematics.
- The curriculum focuses strongly on supporting pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Topics and assemblies successfully promote British values by addressing areas such as democracy, the rule of law and racial equality. The school has a 'Question of the Week' that helps to develop core values such as tolerance and respect. The impact of this is seen in pupils' good attitudes to learning and the kindness and care they show to each other. Leadership of this area is a significant strength and ensures that these key aspects of pupils' personal development are given a consistently high profile.
- Parents are pleased with the work of the school. They feel that their children make good progress and are taught well. This is reflected in comments such as 'My child is thriving here' and 'I am very happy with my children's education.'

Governance of the school

- The governing body has not ensured that the school's safeguarding procedures are robust enough. They have not been supported well enough to enable them to be fully effective in ensuring that safeguarding procedures are managed appropriately. They have not received sufficient ongoing advice to help them to manage issues that have arisen or to be sure that risk assessments are fit for purpose
- The governing body responded positively to a review of governance undertaken following a previous inspection. Consequently governors are more knowledgeable about the school's performance than in the past. Governors are kept well informed about teaching and learning by the headteacher and have also established reliable systems to check things for themselves. For example, 'monitoring mornings' when a number of governors visit the school mean that they can look at an aspect of the school's provision in detail. Based on this monitoring, governors challenge leaders to make improvements where they are needed.
- Governors know where teaching is especially strong and how the school continues to improve it. Their systems for rewarding good teaching through performance management are thorough and are well understood by teachers.
- Governors check that the pupil premium has the right effect on improving pupils' opportunities and academic outcomes. However, they know that reporting on this lacks the right level of detail to help them dig more deeply into which aspects of spending are working especially successfully.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are not effective.
- Staff vetting arrangements have recently been improved, but governors and senior

leaders are not thorough enough in carrying out all the required pre-employment checks on staff.

- Risk assessments in place to safeguard pupils are not fit for purpose. They do not identify what the risks to pupils are and, therefore, do not enable leaders to ensure that all necessary measures are put in place to keep pupils safe.
- There is good support for children looked after by the local authority.
- School leaders understand the need to protect pupils from extremist views and radicalisation. They have undergone the necessary training to fulfil their roles in this area of their work.
- The learning mentor has established rigorous recording systems to manage any concerns about pupils' wellbeing. She has established effective links with a range of external providers, and with parents, to ensure that pupils' needs are addressed.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment has improved since the previous inspection. Teaching is now consistently good throughout the school and pupils are making good progress as a result.
- Teachers establish clear routines in class. They have high expectations of pupils' work and behaviour. Teachers encourage pupils to work hard and expect them to behave well. Pupils respond well to these expectations and classrooms are calm, happy and productive places as a result.
- Relationships between pupils and staff are very positive and are a particular strength of the school. Pupils respond well to their teachers' expectations that they will enjoy learning and always do their best.
- Teachers know their pupils well. They make good use of assessment information to plan tasks that closely reflect the academic needs of pupils. Most of the time, teachers assess the progress of pupils carefully during lessons. They change tasks where needed and use a wide variety of strategies to ensure that pupils stay on track and learn well. Just occasionally, work is too hard for a small number of less-able pupils.
- Teachers provide good challenge for the most able, helping them to improve their skills quickly. This is especially evident in mathematics, where a number of strategies have been introduced to encourage pupils to think like mathematicians and to master reasoning and problem-solving skills.
- Teachers make good use of resources to bring subjects to life. For example, interactive whiteboards are used well to demonstrate next steps so that they are clearly understood.
- Teaching assistants have a positive effect on pupils' learning. They work with different groups, including pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, adapting their responses according to the needs of the pupils so that progress is usually good.
- Reading skills are taught well. Reading activities help pupils to improve their comprehension skills quickly and they make reading enjoyable.

- Most parents are pleased with the quality of teaching in the school. They support teachers well by helping their children with homework and by hearing them read.
- Leaders have rightly identified that the teaching of spelling and phonics is not as strong as other aspects of English teaching. Teachers are less confident in this aspect of their work and skills are not taught systematically enough. Teachers do not give pupils consistently good feedback on how to improve their spelling more quickly or make sure that they do not repeat errors needlessly.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Requires improvement

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare requires improvement.
- The risk assessments in place to safeguard pupils' welfare do not consider the potential hazards presented by different circumstances or activities. As a result, potential risks to pupils are not adequately considered, assessed and mitigated.
- Although the inspection identified concerns around the procedures for safeguarding children, other aspects of promoting pupils' welfare are strong, resulting in pupils' good personal development across a range of skills, knowledge and understanding.
- Pupils say that they feel safe at school. They talk knowledgeably about potential dangers they may face outside school and how to avoid them. This is supported well by activities such as visits to the 'Crucial Crew' where older pupils learn about keeping safe by taking part in different scenarios that require them to make decisions relating to personal safety.
- Pupils know that bullying can take many forms and they are confident that on the rare occasions that it does happen, staff deal with it quickly and effectively.
- Staff have made considerable efforts to teach pupils about e-safety, but pupils are not always clear enough about the possible dangers that they may face when using social media. The school already has plans to strengthen this aspect of pupils' personal development.
- Pupils talk confidently about their work and their experience at school. They are open about their opinions and can justify their viewpoints. Pupils who need extra help when working demonstrate maturity by explaining clearly how this support adds to their learning.
- Pupils contribute well to the wider life of the school by taking responsibilities, for example, by being school councillors or play leaders. The latter organise games for pupils at lunchtime very sensibly. This helps to keep pupils busy during less-structured parts of the day.
- Pupils are unfailingly polite and friendly with each other. Their attitudes to learning are good. They persevere well when working, showing strong resilience even when they find the work difficult.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.

- The vast majority of parents who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, felt that pupils were well behaved in school.
- Inspectors found that pupils conduct themselves well throughout the school day. They work hard in lessons and do their best to present their work neatly. They concentrate well most of the time when working, only occasionally becoming inattentive when teaching does not engage them fully.
- Pupils know the school rules and understand the system of rewards and sanctions in place. They agree that teachers challenge any poor behaviour or bad language, including language that may be discriminatory.
- The school has thorough systems for tracking attendance and works hard with families to make sure that pupils attend school on time and regularly. As a result, pupils' attendance rates are improving and were broadly average in the last academic year. Leaders continue to work closely with outside agencies and parents to improve the attendance of the small number of pupils who are still persistently absent.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Pupils make good progress across the school. Attainment at the end of Year 6 is rising and was broadly average in 2015 and 2016 in reading, writing and mathematics. Pupils also produce good-quality work and make good progress in subjects such as history, geography and computing.
- In key stages 1 and 2, pupils' work in different subjects, including literacy and numeracy, builds well on the good start they make in the early years provision. By Year 6, pupils read confidently and use a range of texts to carry out research. They talk about books they like, expressing strong preferences for different authors. In mathematics, as they get older, pupils carry out increasingly complex calculations and successfully solve problems that require them to apply their knowledge to practical situations.
- When writing, pupils use imaginative vocabulary to make their work interesting. They write for a range of purposes in both English and other subjects, using punctuation and grammar correctly.
- Leaders ensure that different groups of pupils do equally well. While there is some variation from year to year in the attainment of boys and girls, especially in writing in key stage 1, this reflects different starting points rather than weaknesses in provision.
- Disadvantaged pupils make good progress from their starting points and any differences between their attainment and that of other pupils nationally are narrowing. Support for these pupils is well targeted and helps them to improve their skills quickly.
- Leaders and teachers are becoming increasingly skilled at identifying the right sort of intervention for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities to ensure that the support that they receive meets their needs well. As a result, these pupils now make good progress from their starting points.
- The most able pupils make good progress. Teachers routinely give them more challenging work in lessons so that they are able to deepen and extend their understanding. Other initiatives, such as the regular meetings to work with pupils from other local schools, also help them to improve their skills quickly.

- Pupils' spelling is sometimes inaccurate. Pupils make careless errors in their spellings and not all have a secure enough knowledge of phonics. This is reflected in the slightly below-average proportion of pupils reaching the expected levels in the national phonics screening checks at the end of Year 1 in 2015 and 2016. Not all pupils catch up by the end of Year 2.

Early years provision

Good

- Good leadership of this key stage has ensured that provision has improved since the previous inspection. The quality of teaching has improved and this has helped to raise children's attainment by the end of the Reception Year.
- The early years leader ensures that children's safety is carefully considered. She has recently made checks on staff's suitability to work with children and ensured that appropriate levels of supervision are in place for staff whose checks have been slow to arrive.
- When children start school, their levels of development are mixed. The early years leaders has identified that some have limited communication skills. This level of analysis means that children's needs can be quickly addressed. As a result, they make good progress in the Nursery and Reception classes.
- Children's attainment at the end of the Reception Year has been rising quickly and was broadly average in 2016. They develop good social and personal skills, becoming increasingly confident about working in groups and playing happily together. Consequently, all children, including the small number of disadvantaged children, are prepared well both socially and academically for their move to Year 1.
- The quality of teaching is good in the Nursery and Reception classes. Teachers link subjects together, which helps to make work fun and engaging. Teachers focus well on developing early literacy and numeracy skills, providing many opportunities during the day for children to read and write. For example, children write letters and make posters as part of their topic on dragons.
- Adults follow up children's interests to make learning purposeful. For example, a counting activity was adapted to reflect a child's interest in railways by putting the numbers on trains and making it into a game. Activities are tailored very effectively to the needs of the most able, who are challenged to think more deeply and solve more complex problems. Similarly, support for children who have special educational needs and/or disabilities takes good account of their starting points so that they can make good progress.
- Teachers use the large and very well resourced outdoor areas imaginatively to engage children and to support learning in the different parts of the curriculum. Teachers encourage children to take risks when climbing or balancing, providing them with calm and sensitive support at these times. Children work happily on the large range of apparatus that is set out in the outdoor areas.
- All adults have high expectations and they focus strongly on teaching children about the importance of good behaviour. As a result, children behave and cooperate well with each other. They have positive attitudes to learning. There are well-established routines that help children settle quickly when they start school in the Nursery.

- The leader of the early years is a skilled practitioner. She makes sure that staff are knowledgeable about how young children learn and she helps them all to feel valued as members of the team.
- Appropriate policies are in place to ensure that children are properly supervised and are happy and well cared for.
- Links with parents are strong. They are very pleased with what is provided in the early years, typically making comments such as, 'The team do a fantastic job' and 'The adults are very positive and encouraging.'
- The school has chosen to use an online assessment system to record children's activities and progress. Staff use the system particularly well and, as a result, assessment is thorough and accurate. The highly effective use of the online system ensures that information is shared with parents regularly and efficiently. Several parents mentioned how helpful they find it.
- There is a happy atmosphere when children are working, but sometimes children spend too much time without adult support. When this happens, their learning is not moved on quickly enough and this slows the progress they can make.

School details

Unique reference number	115245
Local authority	Essex
Inspection number	10019598

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Foundation
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	339
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Graeme Dykes
Headteacher	Suzanne Ryan
Telephone number	01279 421495
Website	www.katherines.essex.sch.uk
Email address	admin@katherines.essex.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	18–19 November 2014

Information about this school

- Inspectors were aware during this inspection that serious allegations of a child protection nature were being investigated by the appropriate authorities. While Ofsted does not have the power to investigate allegations of this kind, actions taken by the school in response to the allegations were considered alongside the other evidence available at the time of the inspection to inform inspectors' judgements.
- The school meet requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.
- This is a larger-than-average sized primary school with 12 classes. Children in the early years are taught in a Reception class and a Nursery.
- Most pupils are from White British backgrounds.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is well below average.

- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils supported by the pupil premium is average.
- The school met the government's current floor standard in 2015, which are the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 6.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed pupils' learning in lessons, three of which were observed jointly with the headteacher. In addition, the inspectors made some short visits to observe learning at other times.
- Discussions were held with pupils, staff, representatives from the local authority, the Harlow Educational Partnership and members of the governing body.
- The inspectors took account of the views of 35 parents and carers who responded to the Ofsted online questionnaire, Parent View. An inspector also talked with parents at the start of the school day.
- The inspectors listened to pupils read, looked at their work and looked at school documents, including: the school's own information about pupils' learning and progress; planning and monitoring documents; the school development plan; records relating to behaviour and attendance; information about the arrangements to safeguard children; and health and safety documentation.
- The inspectors analysed responses to an inspection questionnaire from 27 members of staff.
- Following the original inspection in October 2016, Ofsted decided that additional evidence was needed to secure the judgements. On 2 December 2016, two of Her Majesty's Inspectors visited the school to gather the additional evidence. During this visit, inspectors visited parts of lessons, spoke with pupils informally, looked at pupils' work, held meetings with senior leaders and governors, and spoke with a representative of the local authority on the telephone.

Inspection team

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Parv Qureshi	Ofsted Inspector
Wendy Varney	Her Majesty's Inspector
Prue Rayner	Her Majesty's Inspector

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In the report, 'disadvantaged pupils' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route. www.gov.uk/pupil-premium-information-for-schools-and-alternative-provision-settings.

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