

St Andrew's CofE Primary Academy

Chardstock, Axminster, Devon EX13 7BJ

Inspection dates

28–29 September 2017

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' achievements when they leave the school at the end of key stage 2 have been negatively affected by recent turbulence in leadership.
- Until recently, the quality of teaching was in decline. It did not enable pupils to make sufficient progress at key stage 2 in reading and mathematics.
- The school has received a high level of support from the multi-academy trust to which it belongs. This support has shored up weaknesses in leadership. However, its impact was not sufficient to prevent pupil underachievement at key stage 2.
- Governors do not have a sufficiently detailed, accurate understanding of pupils' progress. This has limited the extent to which they are able to hold leaders to account. Nevertheless, they have provided necessary support to staff during a time of recent upheaval.
- Although generally improving across the school, some pupils' attitudes to learning require improvement.
- Recently introduced assessment systems are not yet fully embedded. As a result, staff do not currently have a detailed, accurate understanding of pupils' progress.

The school has the following strengths

- Pupils benefit from a curriculum which develops a range of skills, knowledge and interests.
- The new headteacher is backed by a motivated, committed workforce. Staff want the best for pupils and are united in driving forward improvements.
- Pupils' social, emotional and behavioural needs are well supported. They are known as individuals. Staff work closely with families to help pupils feel safe and ready to learn.
- Pupils' conduct around the school is good. They are kind and helpful towards adults and each other. Pupils respect the school environment.
- Provision, quality of teaching and behaviour in the early years are good. Consequently, children are well prepared for the next stage of their education. However, lines of accountability need to be strengthened and leadership roles clarified to enhance provision further.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of leadership by ensuring that:
 - the headteacher has the necessary support and capacity to embed new systems designed to raise pupils' achievement
 - governors have a detailed, accurate understanding of pupil progress in order to hold leaders to account fully
 - lines of accountability are clarified and strengthened to support early years staff in their roles.
- Improve the quality of teaching and raise achievement by ensuring that:
 - new assessment systems enable staff to track pupil progress accurately and provide timely support when needed
 - staff continue to plan for the different needs of pupils in order to develop their reading and mathematics skills at key stage 2
 - staff continue to develop pupils' attitudes to learning so they are able to sustain their concentration and develop self-sufficiency.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- The school has been through a period of turbulence. There have been four headteachers since the last inspection. Changes in leadership have been accompanied by other personnel and recruitment difficulties. Consequently, this turbulence has had a negative impact on staff morale, parental confidence and standards of achievement.
- Leaders' self-evaluation of some aspects of the school's effectiveness is overgenerous, notably of pupils' outcomes when they leave the school. This is because self-evaluation has not kept pace with the school's changing circumstances and new leaders are still getting to know the school.
- The efforts of the Acorn multi-academy trust to tackle these significant challenges have not yet had sufficient impact on raising pupils' achievement in key stage 2. However, the trust's support has stabilised the school. Strong staffing appointments allied to expertise from within the trust mean that the school is now in a position to move forward and make rapid progress.
- New systems, practices and procedures have been introduced to improve the quality of teaching, assessment and behaviour. However, these systems are new and it is too soon for any evidence of impact to be apparent.
- The new headteacher has already made a positive difference in a short time. She has been quick to raise expectations of staff and pupils, engage meaningfully with parents and improve the quality of teaching. One parent who responded to the online survey, Parent View, said, 'Since Mrs Leganski has become the headteacher, the school has improved ten-fold.' Another parent commented, 'The new headteacher is especially welcoming to all of the children and parents. She goes out of her way to speak to you, as do all of the teachers and staff at the school.'
- The headteacher is galvanising the staff successfully, some of whom are new to teaching. She is uniting them behind a shared vision and staff morale is improving as a result. Consequently, there is an 'energy' at work in the school because staff are working hard to drive through improvements.
- Pupils benefit from a strong curriculum. In addition to core subjects, pupils acquire knowledge and skills in other areas, such as humanities and religious education. Support from the trust means that pupils receive specialist tuition in subjects such as art and modern foreign languages. Trust support also enhances the range of extra-curricular opportunities available to pupils.
- Additional funding is used effectively to support pupils who are disadvantaged or have special educational needs and/or disabilities. Individual pupils are well known so that funding is targeted to meet a range of emotional, behavioural and learning needs. For example, a dedicated member of staff assists disadvantaged pupils on a one-to-one basis to move forward in their learning.
- The sports premium additional funding has been well spent to provide pupils with a more enriching experience of sport. For example, funding has enabled pupils to participate increasingly in sporting activities and competitions with other schools in the multi-academy trust. Furthermore, they have benefited from additional sporting

equipment to use in lessons and breaktimes. In addition, and at the request of pupils, there are now more after-school sports clubs on offer.

Governance of the school

- Governors do not have a sufficiently detailed understanding of pupils' progress. Although they have a clearer view of pupils' attainment, governors have not challenged leaders sufficiently to account for progress. This has limited governors' ability to hold leaders to account fully for pupils' outcomes.
- Governors are committed to their work and are fully involved in the life of the school. The school benefits from having a governing body with a range of skills and experience.
- During recent difficult times, the governing body has provided necessary support to staff. Nevertheless, governors acknowledge that, because of this turbulence, they have not, of late, provided enough challenge.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Leaders and designated safeguarding staff take their responsibilities seriously. They are quick to adopt best practice from other institutions to strengthen safeguarding. Consequently, systems and procedures to keep children safe are underpinned by rigour.
- Staff are clear about what they should do and who they should speak to if they have concerns about a child. This is because they have received appropriate training. Referrals are recorded securely in an online system. They are organised well, describing clearly the nature of the concern, the chronology of events and action taken. Staff ensure that vulnerable pupils and families receive the support they deserve, providing it themselves where external agencies do not have the capacity to do so.
- Pupils are taught how to manage risk and keep themselves safe, including staying safe online. Pupils who spoke with me were able to say how they would advise Year 3 pupils to stay safe online. Their advice was clear, appropriate and practical. For example, they said that personal details should not be shared with strangers. Staff also work closely with parents to ensure that they understand the risks their children face online.
- Checks to ensure that staff are suitable to work with children are up to date and comprehensive.
- Leaders have risk-assessed the school site to ensure that security measures are fit for purpose. Any potential weaknesses have been identified and action taken to ensure that children are safe.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- Until recently, teachers did not plan sufficiently for pupils' different needs, particularly in key stage 2. As a result, pupils were not able to make the progress expected of them. Under the direction of the new headteacher, teachers are now planning for pupils' needs more effectively, ably supported by teaching assistants.

- Staff are still in the process of becoming familiar with the school's assessment system. Consequently, they are not yet using assessment fully to inform their planning. In the past, inaccurate assessment meant that information about pupils' progress was unreliable and did not allow staff to identify gaps in pupils' learning.
- Feedback from staff to help pupils improve their work has been variable in its impact across teachers and year groups. Leaders have, very recently, introduced a new policy to increase the effectiveness and consistency of feedback across the school. However, it is too soon for the impact to be visible.
- The current teaching staff, many of whom are new to the school, have rallied around the new headteacher. They bring enthusiasm and dedication to their work. They are implementing successfully new initiatives to improve teaching, are receptive to new ideas and keen to work collaboratively. As a result, the quality of teaching is improving already.
- Teachers are now raising their expectations of pupils. Consequently, habits and routines for effective learning are being better established. Nevertheless, some pupils need to improve their attitudes to learning so that they are able to sustain their concentration when unsupervised.
- Teachers are working conscientiously to develop their subject knowledge. They are taking pains to ensure that sequences of learning are informed by the national curriculum and enabling pupils to make progress. As a result, teachers are teaching with greater confidence because they are clearer about what they want pupils to learn.
- The majority of parents who responded to Parent View agree that their child is well taught and making good progress.

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 well known in this small school. It is important to staff that every pupil is made to feel welcome and valued, and able to get the most out of school. The headteacher reinforces this approach by repeating the message that every pupil 'has the right to be happy, to be safe and to learn'.
- Pupils who spoke with the lead inspector said that there was very little bullying in the school. On the rare occasions it does occur, it is dealt with swiftly and effectively. One pupil said, 'They [staff] look after children.'
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural education is well developed. Pupils are provided with opportunities to reflect on moral issues in religious education and worship assembly. Cultural activities, such as an annual trip to London, enable pupils to experience life in the metropolis. When pupils who spoke with the lead inspector were asked to discuss the question, 'Are laws a good idea?' they put forward good arguments. The issue was discussed thoughtfully and showed that they were open-minded and balanced in their thinking.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Overall attendance is in line with the national average and has been so consistently over time. However, persistent absence is high for a very small number of pupils. Staff are working closely with parents and the education welfare officer to improve the attendance of these pupils.
- Pupils conduct themselves in a calm and orderly way around the school. They are friendly and courteous towards visitors. Pupils wear their uniform well and respect the school environment because they take pride in their school.
- The school environment encourages pupils to behave well and respect it. This is because staff have gone to great lengths to create colourful, vibrant learning spaces. Classroom walls are adorned with displays of pupils' work, highlighting for all pupils the characteristics of high-quality work. Learning walls act as a useful resource for pupils because they help reinforce key concepts or formulae. The space in classrooms and corridors is well used to promote the value and fun of learning.
- All parents who responded to the online survey, Parent View, agree that behaviour is good in the school.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- In 2017, the progress in reading and mathematics made by pupils who left the school was below average. This was a decline compared with previous years when progress had been in line with average. Progress for writing continued to be in line with average in 2017.
- The attainment of pupils who left the school in mathematics was below average in 2017. Similarly, the number of pupils achieving the expected standard in all their subjects combined was below average. Furthermore, the number of pupils achieving the expected standard and higher standard in English grammar, punctuation and spelling was below average.
- The school's information for monitoring and evaluating progress has been too imprecise. Consequently, leaders at all levels have not had a sharp-enough understanding of progress. This has hindered efforts to ensure that pupils make the progress of which they are capable. Pupils therefore make variable progress across different year groups.
- In 2017, pupils' attainment in key stage 1 was higher than the previous year. Over time, achievement in this key stage has been volatile but now shows signs of improvement.
- Work in pupils' books shows that, even though it is still relatively early in the academic year, more is being expected of them. They present their work neatly and take pride in it. Pupils are being provided with opportunities to develop writing and mathematical calculation skills. As a result, pupils are beginning to produce work of a higher quality.
- Over time, pupils' achievement in the national phonics check has been in line with, or above, the national average.

Early years provision

Good

- Over time, the number of children achieving a good level of development has been above average. This is because children benefit from good provision, strong teaching and a high level of personal attention.
- Children are well behaved. This is because good habits and routines are established early. As a result, children know how to keep themselves safe, indoors and out, treat each other kindly and participate in activities harmoniously. For example, the lead inspector observed a group of girls in Reception happily engaged in role play together while unsupervised. The children led their own learning because they were calm and focused on the activity.
- Children's needs are well understood. This is because accurate assessment of their abilities when they enter the school, complemented by regular, ongoing assessment, provides staff with the information they need.
- Early years staff benefit from the support and expertise provided by the multi-academy trust. Their training needs have been identified and are being met, for example through training in improving guided writing and tackling disadvantage.
- The Reception teacher and nursery staff liaise effectively to ensure that there is a smooth transition for children as they move up the school. Frequent communication between staff and discussion of children's needs mean that children feel comfortable and safe moving up to Reception.
- Parents are involved in their child's learning through use of the school's online assessment system. This tool ensures that parents play an active part in following closely, and contributing to, their child's progress.
- Lines of accountability between trust and school leaders and early years staff are not clearly identifiable. This means that, currently, there is limited long-term strategic planning in place. This hinders early years staff from realising fully the potential of the provision. Nevertheless, children's outcomes are good because provision supports their development well.

School details

Unique reference number	141527
Local authority	Devon
Inspection number	10036962

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	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	2 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	117
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of local governing body	Fiona Bowie
Headteacher	Tracey Leganski
Telephone number	01460 220534
Website	www.acornacademy.org
Email address	chardstockoffice@acornacademy.org
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 Department for Education guidance on what academies should publish.
- St Andrew's Church of England Primary School is a smaller than average-sized primary school.
- The school has been part of the Acorn multi-academy trust since 2014.
- The current headteacher took up post in September 2017. Since the last inspection there have been three headteachers.
- The majority of pupils are from a White British background.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium is below average.

- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities and receive support is broadly in line with the national average. The proportion of pupils who have a statement of special educational needs or an education, health and care plan is below average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 6.
- The multi-academy trust has commissioned a review of governance, soon to take place, for all schools in the trust.

Information about this inspection

- The lead inspector observed learning in lessons with the headteacher and executive headteacher of the trust.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, the executive headteacher and school improvement specialists employed by the trust. A meeting was also held with representatives of the governing body.
- The lead inspector scrutinised a wide range of documentation. This included the school's self-evaluation and school development plan, governing body minutes, governors' notes of visit, trust notes of visit, attendance records and safeguarding records.
- The lead inspector scrutinised pupils' work and observed their conduct around the school and at breaktimes.
- A group of pupils spoke with the lead inspector.
- The lead inspector took account of 32 responses to the online Parent View survey.

Inspection team

Steve Smith, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

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