

St George's Infant School and Nursery

Barrington Road, Colchester, Essex CO2 7RW

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	Requires improvement
Outcomes for pupils	Requires improvement
Early years provision	Requires improvement
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- At the end of key stage 1, outcomes in writing and mathematics are below those seen nationally. Standards in reading are broadly average.
- Although improving, the proportion of children who achieve a good level of development at the end of Reception Year is below that seen nationally.
- Governors have not been rigorous enough in holding leaders to account. They have been too accepting of the information they have been given.
- The school's curriculum does not provide enough opportunities for exciting learning experiences to engage and inspire pupils.
- The quality of teaching is not consistently good across the school. Work does not always challenge pupils at the right level in English and mathematics.
- Where teaching is weaker, pupils' attention wanders and behaviour slips. Consequently, pupils' progress slows.
- Pupils do not have enough opportunities to practise and apply their writing skills. Spelling is poor for many pupils.
- Until this year, the subject leaders for mathematics and English have not had appropriate time to check teaching and learning, and drive improvements in their subject areas.

The school has the following strengths

- The new headteacher has a clear and accurate understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. She has taken prompt and decisive action to tackle the most important weaknesses.
- Pupils' personal development and welfare needs are well met. Pupils feel safe and staff work well to maintain a strong safeguarding culture across the school.
- Leaders have successfully improved outcomes in phonics, and for early years. They have recently introduced a number of appropriate initiatives to address remaining weaknesses.
- The support that teaching assistants give to pupils is highly effective. This is especially the case for those who have complex needs.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the effectiveness of leaders and managers in increasing pupils' attainment and progress by:
 - ensuring that all middle leaders carry out their roles effectively and drive the new initiatives that have been introduced in mathematics and writing
 - taking quick and effective action to eliminate existing weaknesses in teaching, including providing opportunities for staff to learn from good practice within and beyond the school
 - providing more detailed information to governors so that they are better able to challenge leaders and hold them to account for the impact of their actions on pupils' progress
 - improving the curriculum so that it consistently engages pupils in their learning.
- Improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment so that pupils make consistently good progress throughout the school, by ensuring that:
 - teachers plan work that meets the needs of all pupils
 - teachers provide the right support in mathematics and writing tasks so that pupils are fully engaged and can get on with their work
 - there are good opportunities for pupils to practise and improve their writing skills
 - teachers pay good attention to pupils' spelling so that errors are corrected.
- Improve outcomes at the end of the early years foundation stage by building on newly introduced approaches and developing good opportunities for children to engage in writing and mathematical tasks.

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

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- Since the previous inspection, standards have declined, particularly in writing and mathematics. Over the last three years, leaders have brought about some improvements. However, these have been too slow and have not ensured that pupils make good progress. Standards remain too low at the end of early years and at the end of key stage 1 for writing and mathematics.
- Until recently, governors have not challenged the information that they were given about how well the school was doing, and accepted an overgenerous self-evaluation as an accurate picture.
- Middle leaders for mathematics and English have not carried out checks on learning and have not provided support to teachers to help them improve teaching in mathematics and English. They have not received the training they need to enable them to carry out their roles effectively.
- The new headteacher has very quickly established a deep and accurate understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. The headteacher and the leadership team have identified the correct actions to address weaknesses. They have worked hard to introduce new initiatives which are beginning to have an impact.
- A new curriculum plan for teaching mathematics has been introduced, together with revised approaches to teaching writing and spelling. There is also a new approach to planning in early years. These changes are already making a difference. Work in pupils' books demonstrates the positive impact of the new approaches to teaching.
- Leaders have been successful in increasing the proportion of pupils who reach the expected standard in the Year 1 phonics screening check. A new approach, introduced last year, has had a positive impact. Outcomes in phonics are now in line with the national average. Overall outcomes in reading at the end of Year 2 are stronger than those in writing and mathematics, and standards are average.
- Leaders have ensured that staff have had appropriate training to deal with the small number of children who have complex needs and who sometimes present challenging behaviour. As a result, the children are being well managed and supported. Records show that incidents of highly challenging and disruptive behaviour have diminished.
- Parents are overwhelmingly supportive of the school. Of those who responded to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, 100% said that they would recommend the school to others. Many left additional positive written comments. One typical comment was, 'Both my children really enjoy attending St George's and the school and its staff are always very welcoming and supportive of the children and families.'
- Provision for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is led and managed well. The special educational needs coordinator is experienced and highly knowledgeable. Leaders have ensured that the additional funding is used to meet their needs well. This group of pupils make good progress from their individual starting points.
- The pupil premium grant is used effectively. Most disadvantaged pupils are making good progress and differences in their outcomes compared with those of others

nationally are diminishing.

- The physical education and sport premium is spent well. It provides specialist sports coaching for pupils and professional development opportunities for staff. Funding is also used to provide a range of after-school sports clubs, including those for football, rugby, cricket, archery, dance and drama.
- The recently improved curriculum provides a range of learning opportunities within and beyond the school day. However, senior leaders are aware that further development is required to ensure that the curriculum provides more opportunities for pupils to develop their writing.
- The curriculum contributes well to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Pupils understand the importance of tolerance and respect, which they display through positive attitudes towards each other. Relationships between pupils and adults are good. Pupils are well prepared for life in modern Britain.

Governance of the school

- Governors' views of the school and their impression of the quality of teaching and outcomes for pupils have been inaccurate historically because they have accepted information provided to them by leaders without sufficient challenge.
- Governors now receive clearer and more detailed information about how well the school is doing. Consequently, they are more aware of the school's strengths and weaknesses.
- Governors are very committed and want the best for pupils at the school. They make frequent visits to the school and are very supportive of school events.
- Governors want to fulfil their responsibilities with regard to providing appropriate challenge. Historically, they have been constrained by difficulties in recruiting new governors. They welcome the planned support from the local authority to strengthen governance.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- At the start of the inspection, the inspection team identified some errors and gaps in safeguarding systems and procedures. The school addressed these during the inspection. Inspectors were satisfied that the school was able to demonstrate that all statutory safeguarding requirements are now met.
- All staff receive regular safeguarding training and there is a culture of vigilance within the school. Staff are clear about when and how they should report concerns. They have been trained to identify signs that a pupil may be exposed to radicalisation or other forms of abuse.
- Safeguarding systems and procedures have been strengthened. Since coming into post, the headteacher, supported by the deputy headteacher, has carried out an audit of safeguarding systems and procedures. Immediate action was taken to strengthen these, including the system for centrally recording information about all aspects of safeguarding. The headteacher has reorganised all child protection files. Each file has

been checked to ensure that the right actions have been taken to address concerns that have been raised. All files now have an up-to-date chronology, showing the actions that the school has taken to protect pupils.

- The headteacher has received appropriate training to fulfil her role as the school's designated safeguarding lead. The deputy headteacher has received similar training and a further member of staff is due to attend training in the near future.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- The quality of teaching is inconsistent. Teachers do not set work that challenges pupils at the right level consistently. Too regularly, pupils find the work either too difficult or too easy. When this is the case, pupils' attention wanders and consequently they do not make as much progress as they could, particularly in writing and mathematics.
- Teachers do not ensure that pupils have appropriate resources to support their learning in writing and mathematics tasks. This means that pupils' progress in lessons is sometimes slower than it could be.
- There are too few opportunities for pupils to practise and apply their writing skills. They do not have regular opportunities to apply their knowledge of grammar, punctuation and spelling in a wide range of writing activities. Leaders recognise that this is a priority for development and are making improvements quickly.
- The school successfully develops pupils' reading skills. Phonics is taught systematically from early years. Pupils apply their knowledge well to quickly recognise letters that represent different sounds. The knowledge is used effectively when reading unfamiliar words and sentences.
- Leaders have recognised the need to improve handwriting and presentation. Teachers provide pupils with regular opportunities to practise joining letters. This is leading to improvements in pupils' handwriting.
- A programme to develop pupils' spelling has been introduced. However, it is too early to judge how effective this is in improving pupils' spelling.
- The strongest teaching in the school is characterised by teachers asking probing questions that challenge pupils and develop their thinking. Where this is the case, teachers make clear to pupils what they are required to do and what they need to do to be successful. Work challenges all pupils at the right level and pupils have appropriate resources to support learning. In these classes, pupils' behaviour is managed well. This good practice has not been shared sufficiently across the school. Staff do not benefit from opportunities to learn from their colleagues.
- Teachers and teaching assistants provide appropriate support during lessons for individual pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities and for those who are disadvantaged. As a result, these pupils make at least appropriate progress in class and over time. Teaching assistants also provide very skilful support for the small number of pupils who have complex behavioural needs. Consequently, their behaviour is well managed.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Requires improvement

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to support pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils feel safe in school. For example, they know that doors are locked so that strangers cannot get in and that all visitors to the school wear badges. Their views are echoed by parents, who are confident that their children are well looked after when in school. Parents spoken to outside school all commented on how happy their children are in school and how well they had settled in their new classes.
- Pupils have a good understanding of bullying, at a level appropriate for their age. Those pupils who spoke with inspectors said that bullying is rare and they feel confident that staff will sort things out if they do have any concerns.
- Pupils are taught how to keep safe, including when online. Safe use of technology has a high profile across the school. Pupils confidently explained to inspectors the importance of not sharing personal information about themselves when using the internet. They enjoy the opportunities they have for taking responsibility, such as participating in the eco council.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement.
- Some pupils find it difficult to maintain concentration on their work. This is usually because work is too easy or too hard and occasionally when behaviour is not well managed. When this happens, pupils do not make the good progress that they could.
- During transition times following break- and lunch-times, lessons sometimes get off to a slow start when pupils find it difficult to settle. This eats into important learning time.
- Most pupils conduct themselves well when moving around the school and in lessons. They are very polite and respectful of each other and adults. During the inspection, pupils engaged confidently with inspectors and talked enthusiastically about aspects of school life.
- The school's overall rate of attendance is similar to the national average. Leaders have worked hard to reduce the persistent absence of a small number of pupils. No groups are disadvantaged by poor attendance.
- Staff skilfully support the small number of pupils who find it hard to manage their behaviour. Appropriate training has ensured that all staff are well equipped to support the needs of the pupils. The strong focus on improving behaviour has meant a reduction in the number of serious incidents over time.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- Following the previous inspection, standards in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of key stage 1 dipped and were below average. Despite some improvements since then, the proportion of pupils who reached the expected standard in writing and mathematics remained below average. Too few pupils achieved greater depth in either subject in 2016.
- Pupils' attainment in the 2017 national assessments shows that the improvement in outcomes for writing and mathematics has been maintained.
- Inspectors scrutinised work in books for both current year groups and from last academic year for writing and mathematics. These show that recent initiatives to improve writing and mathematics are bringing about improvements in pupils' progress.
- Too few of the most able pupils make good enough progress to ensure that they achieve greater depth in writing and mathematics. This is because the work they are given does not challenge them enough. Where teaching is stronger, these pupils are given more demanding work and consequently make better progress.
- Pupils' standards in reading are close to average for the expected level and are average for those pupils working at greater depth. Pupils' outcomes in the phonics screening check have steadily improved. The proportion of pupils meeting the expected level is broadly average.
- Most disadvantaged pupils make at least similar progress to other pupils and many make better progress. This is because leaders ensure that the additional funding is appropriately targeted. Systems are in place to ensure that there are regular checks on the progress of all pupils, including those who are disadvantaged.
- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities make similar progress to other pupils from their individual starting points. The pupils are monitored closely by the special educational needs coordinator and their progress is carefully tracked. She has ensured that additional funding for the pupils is now being spent more effectively.

Early years provision

Requires improvement

- Outcomes for children at the end of Reception Year show consistent year-on-year improvement, but too few achieve a good level of development.
- When children work alongside an adult, they benefit from effective modelling of spoken language and good questioning, which deepens and extends their learning. However, when children choose their own activities, adults do not consistently intervene or guide them promptly enough to ensure that they make the most of opportunities provided to develop their learning, particular their writing and number skills.
- Leaders and the early years team are well aware of strengths and weakness in provision and teaching. They have introduced new approaches to planning from the start of this year. There are clear and appropriate plans to further improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment in both Nursery and Reception.
- The new approaches are already having an impact. During the inspection, the new focus on developing children's language skills really shone through. Children were highly engaged in story-telling activities, which are developing their language ready to write.
- Children in the Nursery and Reception classes have settled happily and confidently into

school life. They behave well and have quickly learned school rules and routines. Children have good attitudes to learning. They move around sensibly and enjoy the activities that adults plan for them.

- Adults demonstrate appropriate behaviour at all times and this helps children to develop their personal, social and emotional skills. Already they play together well and are learning to share resources.
- The teaching of phonics is systematic and this is helping children to develop their understanding of letters and sounds.
- Additional funding is well targeted to ensure that children who need additional support receive this. For example, one-to-one support helps children who have speech, language and communication difficulties to develop their skills.
- Children's statutory welfare, safeguarding and safety needs are fully met.
- Parents who spoke to inspectors reported positively about communication and the information they receive from the school to help their children settle well in early years. They welcome the opportunities to speak to staff at the beginning and end of the day and appreciate the advice from the school on how to support learning at home.

School details

Unique reference number	114705
Local authority	Essex
Inspection number	10031569

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	Infant
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3 to 7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	317
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Kathy Lee
Headteacher	Lehla Abbott
Telephone number	01206 578080
Website	www.st-georgesinfantandnursery.co.uk
Email address	head@st-georges-inf.essex.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	16 January 2013

Information about this school

- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.
- There has been a change in headteacher since the previous inspection. The current headteacher joined the school in September 2017.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils is below the national average.
- The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is below the national average.
- The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds is below the national average.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is below the national average. However, they include a number of children who have complex needs.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching across the school, including joint observations with the headteacher. They listened to pupils read and scrutinised work in pupils' books in all current classes. They also looked at some of the work that pupils had completed during last academic year.
- Inspectors talked to three groups of pupils about their experiences of school and also spoke with them during break- and lunch-times.
- Discussions took place informally with parents when they were delivering their children to school. Inspectors took account of 17 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, and 13 electronic comments.
- Inspectors considered 11 responses received to the staff questionnaire and one response to the pupil survey.
- Meetings were held with the chair of the governing body and school leaders. The lead inspector had a telephone conversation with a representative from the local authority.
- A range of documentation was scrutinised. This included information on all aspects of safeguarding, and pupils' progress, and school development plans and self-evaluations.

Inspection team

Joan Beale, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Russell Ayling	Ofsted Inspector
James Richards	Ofsted Inspector
Lynn Lowery	Ofsted 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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