

All Faiths Children's Academy

Gun Lane, Strood, Rochester, Kent ME2 4UF

Inspection dates

7–8 November 2017

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- Teaching is not consistently good. Leaders are aware of this and are making the necessary changes to improve provision.
- Some teachers do not use assessment well enough to promote good learning in lessons.
- Teaching is not challenging enough for pupils; this is particularly the case in mathematics and for the most able pupils.
- Opportunities to develop writing and mathematical skills across the curriculum are not fully developed.
- Rates of progress across the school are inconsistent. Not enough pupils are reaching the standards expected for their age in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Disadvantaged pupils do not achieve as well as their classmates. Recent changes have improved their progress but have not yet been successful in closing gaps between their achievement and that of their peers across the school.

The school has the following strengths

- The recent appointment of the acting headteacher to the permanent role has provided stability to the leadership. The headteacher has the support of leaders, staff and parents. He is passionately committed to driving the school forward.
- Governors have an accurate understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. They have taken swift and decisive action to secure the support the school needs.
- The revised curriculum engages and excites pupils. They enjoy their learning.
- Pupils who have education, health and care plans are supported well. The provision for deaf pupils ensures that pupils are fully involved in the life of the school and make good progress.
- Pupils are well-cared-for. There is a culture of safeguarding that permeates every level of school life. Safeguarding procedures are exemplary.
- Children get off to a good start in the early years and make good progress from their starting points.
- The teaching of phonics is effective.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise levels of achievement across the school so that more pupils in key stages 1 and 2 attain levels in line with age-related expectations across the curriculum.
- Accelerate the progress of disadvantaged pupils so that gaps in attainment are closed.
- Improve the teaching of mathematics across the school, by:
 - ensuring that misconceptions are identified and corrected quickly and consistently
 - increasing opportunities for pupils to use reasoning skills effectively to deepen their knowledge, skills and understanding
 - ensuring that teaching is well matched to pupils' needs and systematically provides the challenge all pupils, but specifically the most able, need to support accelerated progress.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- The changes to assessment, curriculum and leadership introduced by the headteacher during the period he was acting headteacher are beginning to improve standards across the school. His recent appointment as headteacher has united the staff and parents behind him in his determination to drive the school forward.
- Leaders have an accurate understanding of what needs to be done to improve teaching and standards. They have put detailed plans in place to address the issues. Leaders are doing the right things in the right order and as a result the school is improving. For example, the end-of-key-stage-1 national assessments in 2017 show a dramatic improvement in the numbers of pupils attaining expected standards in reading, writing and mathematics. Leaders are not complacent, however, and acknowledge that improvements in achievement are not yet consistent across all groups and year groups. They acknowledge that standards must continue to rise to ensure that All Faiths Children's Academy is a good school.
- Leaders at all levels have benefited from the effective support provided by the trust. Teachers work across the trust to share expertise and moderate pupils' work to help to ensure their planning is appropriate and assessment is accurate.
- The curriculum is broad, balanced and engaging for pupils. Topics such as 'a child's war' and 'predator' provide a wealth of exciting and meaningful learning experiences like searching for dragons and creating moonscapes. Learning is further enhanced through trips, such as a Year 6 visit to the Imperial War Museum, and by bringing in information from home. Extra-curricular clubs enable pupils to develop new sports skills and interests.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, together with British values, are promoted well across the curriculum. Regular assemblies develop the ethos of the school as a 'thinking school'. This ethos is further developed by the 'thinking drive team', where pupils and staff meet regularly to share ideas on how to develop thinking.
- Leaders have ensured that the pupils who attend the specialist deaf provision are fully integrated into the wider life of the school. Skilled specialist staff are on hand in classes, assemblies and at playtime to support pupils in both their learning and play, when needed.
- Parents are supportive of the school. Most of those who completed the Ofsted online questionnaire, Parent View, or spoke to inspectors would recommend the school. Comments such as, 'children are happy and settled' were typical of those comments received. Where parents had concerns, such as wanting more information about the progress their children make, leaders have responded swiftly. For example, leaders have given parents more information, and invite them into school for a series of workshops and events.
- The pupil premium funding has been reviewed carefully to ensure that it is used effectively. This has helped to secure recent improvements in progress for disadvantaged pupils. However, progress is not yet sufficiently rapid or consistent, and differences between disadvantaged pupils and their classmates remain.

- Many of the middle leaders across the school are new to their roles. Effective training and support have ensured that they have clear plans to improve their subjects and are fully involved in delivering those plans. Many leaders have not yet reached the stage of evaluating these actions to ensure that plans have been effective.

Governance of the school

- The regional governing body knows the school well. It has provided effective support through a period of staffing turbulence to ensure that the school now has the staff and expertise needed to continue to improve. Governors bring a wide range of expertise to their roles. This enables them to provide informed, helpful support and challenge to leaders. They have a clear understanding of their responsibilities within the structure of the trust.
- The academy advisory board is given wide-ranging and detailed information about the school. As a result, board members have an accurate understanding of the strengths and areas of development for the school.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Safeguarding is at the centre of the work of all leaders and staff. The highly effective safeguarding lead from the trust has ensured that there is a whole-school culture of vigilance and care for children and families. Training is provided swiftly following staff appointment and is enhanced through regular bulletins and updates. Staff demonstrate that they know what to do to keep children safe.
- Staff at all levels build positive and productive relationships with families. These close relationships help parents to feel comfortable seeking advice and assistance when it is needed from time to time. The school also works well with other professionals to provide appropriate support for families.
- Records are detailed, fit for purpose, and show that staff take appropriate action to safeguard pupils. Recruitment checks on staff are suitable and thorough. In all aspects of the school's work, pupils' safety and well-being take priority.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- Teaching is not yet consistently good. Therefore, not enough pupils are making the progress they need to reach the standards expected for their age.
- Some teachers do not make enough use of accurate assessment information to plan lessons that match pupils' learning needs closely. As a result, time is not used effectively in some classes to ensure that pupils progress well. This is particularly the case for the most able pupils, as well as in mathematics generally.
- Changes to the mathematics curriculum are providing pupils with more opportunities to solve problems and develop reasoning skills. However, pupils' books, together with assessment information, show that progress in mathematics is not yet good across the school. Some pupils do not have the necessary skills, such as times-tables recall, that

they need to solve problems quickly. This means that too often pupils do not get through enough mathematics to complete the problems that require them to apply their knowledge in more complex ways.

- Pupils are not given enough opportunities to develop and extend their writing and mathematical skills across the curriculum. For example, scientific recording lacks detailed reasoning and there are too few opportunities to record and interpret data.
- Where teaching is most effective, teachers ask probing questions, model high expectations and challenge misconceptions quickly, which supports good progress across the curriculum.
- The impact of teaching assistants is positive. They ask effective questions that help pupils to clarify and develop their thinking. Pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities benefit from skilled support which is well matched to their needs. As a result, these pupils enjoy their learning and most make good progress from their starting points.
- In the specialist facility for deaf pupils, teaching is of high quality and supports pupils in developing their confidence, independence and skills as learners. Pupils are highly motivated, and describe their success in terms such as 'awesome'.
- Pupils read widely and often. Pupils who read to inspectors demonstrated a love of reading and could talk about the authors and styles they enjoy. Pupils are confident readers and are able to apply a range of skills to decode new vocabulary.
- The teaching of phonics is effective because most staff have secure subject knowledge. This means that they can support pupils well in recognising and blending sounds to create words. For example, a group reading the 'ng' sound at the end of words made 'wi(ng)', before excitedly extending this learning to make 'pi(ng) po(ng)'.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils feel safe at school and told inspectors there is always someone to talk to if they have a problem. They are confident that they will be listened to. Levels of supervision around the school for all pupils, but especially the deaf pupils, are good.
- Pupils are confident that incidents of bullying are dealt with well by staff. School records show that the actions that leaders take to deal with bullying are appropriate and timely.
- There are clear opportunities for pupils to take responsibility in the school; for example, the school council introduced the popular 'own clothes' birthday days. In addition, pupils operate the equipment and lead some of the signing during assemblies.
- In the dinner hall and at breakfast club pupils enjoy socialising and eating together. They can explain healthy eating choices and understand that, 'too much salt, like chips, and sugar, like sweets, is a bad thing'.
- The school is taking every possible action to improve attendance. Attendance is

improving, but some disadvantaged pupils still do not attend school regularly enough.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Pupils enjoy coming to school. They play and learn well together, supporting each other and celebrating each other's successes.
- Pupils are respectful both towards each other and to staff. They are friendly and polite. As a result, the school has a calm, purposeful but relaxed atmosphere in which pupils thrive and are happy.
- Attitudes to learning and behaviour in lessons are good. Pupils are keen to learn and take increasing amounts of pride and care in their work.
- There are few instances of poor behaviour. The systems that are in place to support behaviour are understood and consistently applied. This means that everyone is clear about what is expected. Occasionally, pupils become restless, but this is linked to teaching that is not well matched to their needs.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- Current pupils' progress in reading, writing and mathematics is variable. Pupils in Year 5 and Year 6 are achieving better than those in other year groups. Recent improvements to teaching have led to an acceleration in progress. However, for some pupils teaching has not enabled them to achieve well enough over time.
- Disadvantaged pupils' achievement is not good. In most year groups, disadvantaged pupils' attainment in English and mathematics is behind that of their classmates. The pupil premium funding is now being used effectively to help them catch up, but leaders acknowledge that there is much work to be done before achievement gaps are closed.
- Last year, pupils at the end of key stage 2 made broadly average progress in reading and writing, but below average progress in mathematics. The work in pupils' books shows that progress of current pupils in mathematics across both key stage 1 and key stage 2 is not yet good.
- Outcomes for pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities vary. In a few classes, some make less progress where teaching is less effective at supporting their needs. In the specialist deaf provision, pupils make good progress from their starting points because provision and teaching are good.
- In 2017, the proportions of pupils reaching the standards expected for their age in key stage 1 were similar to or above the national averages in reading, writing and mathematics.
- For the past two years the proportions of non-deaf pupils who attain the required standard in the phonics screening check have been above levels seen nationally. The teaching of phonics is effective.

Early years provision

Good

- The proportion of children reaching a good level of development is above the national average over time. This represents good progress from their starting points.
- Leaders use a wide range of observations to identify the learning needs of individuals and groups. The curriculum is then adapted accordingly. For example, leaders have noticed the current Reception Year children need to understand traditional story structure. Therefore, children have been acting out and retelling traditional tales in adult-led sessions.
- Leaders have used pupil premium funding effectively to provide specific interventions designed to support key skills such as speech and language development.
- The environment and curriculum are stimulating for children, both inside and out. This ensures that children are excited by, and engaged in, their learning. The wider school environment such as the copse wooded area is also well used; for example, providing the ideal setting for 'Little Red Riding Hood' re-enactments.
- Parents who spoke to inspectors were happy at how quickly their children had settled into early years. They appreciate the opportunities to share how their children learn provided by the open-door sessions and home visits. Comments such as, 'I feel happy that my child is in a safe, comfortable environment where he will learn and grow' were typical of those received.
- Leaders have introduced a new system to share learning observations with parents. They are supporting parents in using the system to contribute their own observations to these records.
- Teachers and teaching assistants use questioning effectively to support and extend children's learning during child-initiated work. However, leaders have correctly identified that these skills could be further developed during adult-led learning.

School details

Unique reference number	138182
Local authority	Medway
Inspection number	10033047

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	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	240
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair	Lee Round
Headteacher	Cormac Murphy
Telephone number	01634 717115
Website	www.allfaithschildrensacademy.org.uk
Email address	office@allfaithschildrensacademy.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	25–26 June 2013

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.
- The school converted to an academy in June 2012. It is part of the Thinking Schools Academy Trust. Local governance is delivered through the academy advisory board and regional governance via the Medway primary regional governing body.
- The school contains a specialist deaf provision for 18 pupils from Nursery to Year 6. Pupils are divided into two classes, but work within mainstream classes for 40% of the school week. Pupils are fully integrated into the wider life of the school.
- The school also hosts a nurture provision for pupils from other schools in the area who have social and emotional needs and need extra help.

- The school meets the current government floor standards.
- There have been considerable staff changes since the last inspection. Following the retirement of the headteacher, a replacement joined the school before taking maternity leave. The current headteacher took on the acting headteacher role in September 2016 and was appointed permanently from September 2017.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed lessons in all classes, spoke to pupils and looked at work in their exercise books. Some observations were conducted jointly with senior leaders.
- Meetings were held with senior leaders, middle leaders, teachers, a group of pupils, members of the regional governing body and academy advisory board.
- Inspectors spoke to parents on the playground, and took into account 27 responses, including, 18 written comments, to the online questionnaire (Parent View). Inspectors also considered 21 responses to the staff questionnaire, 21 responses to the pupil questionnaire and the school's own parent and pupil survey.
- A range of documents was looked at, including the school's self-evaluation and improvement plans, information about pupils' achievement and records concerning pupils' attendance, behaviour and safety.

Inspection team

Deborah Gordon, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Graham Chisnell	Ofsted Inspector
Frances Robinson	Ofsted Inspector

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