

Totnes St John's Church of England Primary School

Pathfields, Totnes, Devon TQ9 5TZ

Inspection dates

22–23 November 2017

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an inadequate school

- As a result of weak teaching and a poorly planned curriculum, pupils' progress and attainment are inadequate.
- Leaders fail to ensure an acceptable standard of education. The capacity of the current leadership team is poor. Teachers lack clear direction and guidance from the school's leadership team.
- In recent years, governors have not held senior leaders to account for pupils' underachievement.
- Pupils' attendance is poor and is not improving fast enough. Rates of persistent absence are well above those found nationally.
- The curriculum is not broad and balanced. It does not build upon what pupils can do and understand. Leaders are not taking effective action to secure good attitudes to learning from pupils.
- Leaders, including middle leaders, are not doing enough to improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. This impairs the progress of pupils, including the most able significantly.
- Pupils' progress in writing and mathematics is consistently slow and shows little sign of improvement.
- Some additional funding is not used effectively. As a result, disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities do not make enough progress.
- Teachers' expectations of pupils' behaviour are not high enough.
- An increasing number of children achieve a good level of development in the early years. However, teaching requires improvement to ensure that children make good or better progress with their learning.

The school has the following strengths

- Pupils achieve well in reading.
- Pupils benefit from good use of the additional funding for physical education and sport.

Full report

In accordance with section 44(1) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires special measures because it is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the persons responsible for leading, managing or governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Strengthen leadership and management, by:
 - establishing clear, consistent guidance for staff so that they provide an acceptable standard of education
 - ensuring that leaders, at all levels, are stringently held to account for pupils' progress, especially in writing and mathematics
 - implementing a broad and balanced curriculum to improve the progress pupils make
 - ensuring that middle leaders improve pupils' progress and attainment in their subject areas effectively
 - ensuring that all teaching staff take effective action to instil good attitudes to learning in pupils
 - ensuring that the school uses funding for disadvantaged pupils effectively to improve pupils' progress in writing and mathematics
 - developing effective leadership which carefully monitors and analyses the progress of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities
 - carefully monitoring teaching, learning and assessment to ensure that the most able pupils are challenged sufficiently in their learning
 - closely scrutinising reasoning and problem-solving in mathematics, to ensure that pupils make consistently strong progress across the school.
- Strengthen pupils' personal development and behaviour by ensuring:
 - a relentless focus to reduce levels of persistent absence
 - pupils develop positive attitudes to learning which have a good impact on the progress they make
- Rapidly improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment by teachers:
 - ensuring that teaching builds upon what pupils already know and understand
 - taking full responsibility for improving the progress of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities from their individual starting points
 - ensuring that pupils practise their calculation skills through reasoning and problem-solving in mathematics
 - providing greater challenge for the most able pupils in the core areas of learning,

especially writing and mathematics.

External reviews of governance and the school's use of the pupil premium should be undertaken in order to assess how these aspects of leadership and management may be improved.

The school should not seek to appoint newly qualified teachers.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Inadequate

- Leaders do not have an accurate and comprehensive understanding of the quality of education the school provides. They rely too heavily on external support to provide guidance. Self-evaluation, while clearly identifying weaknesses, is not precise. As a result, leaders have not focused their actions sharply enough to ensure rapid improvement.
- Leaders do not provide clear and consistent guidance for teaching staff. This is of particular importance given the very high proportion of teachers who are new to the school. Leaders have made positive changes to teaching and checks on pupils' learning as part of the process of securing partnerships with other schools. However, guidance has varied because the school has received conflicting messages from different organisations. As a result, inconsistencies exist in approaches to teaching, learning and assessment. Pupils' progress and attainment are not improving quickly enough.
- Leaders and governors have been too slow in adapting to the challenges of the new primary national curriculum introduced in 2014. They have not dealt with areas for improvement outlined in the previous inspection report. For example, they have not carefully monitored pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities in order for them to achieve well.
- Middle leaders have not received the support they need to effectively raise standards in their subject areas. Weaknesses exist in teaching and changes to improve pupils' progress have not happened quickly enough.
- The curriculum is too narrow. Coverage of important curriculum areas, such as science, is minimal. The teaching of skills and concepts is not methodical. Work on history, geography and religious education is too limited and teachers do not sufficiently encourage pupils' art work.
- The curriculum does not support pupils' social development effectively. Consequently, too often, pupils lack respect for each other and adults. Leaders are not doing enough to enable pupils to develop the skills and attitudes required to be effective learners and contribute positively to life in modern Britain.
- Leaders have failed to establish effective systems to assure themselves that teachers' assessment information is accurate. Initiatives introduced to hold teachers to account are too recent to demonstrate an impact on improving teaching, learning and assessment.
- Leaders and governors do not make effective use of pupil premium funding. They do not have an accurate view on whether the expenditure is improving outcomes for disadvantaged pupils. The exception to this is a programme to develop reading for pupils, which has been effective.
- Leaders make good use of the physical education (PE) and sport premium. Changes this academic year are making a positive contribution to pupils' physical and mental health as well as their readiness to start the school day. This is due to organised early morning sport sessions. These sessions are valued by parents and pupils alike.

Governance of the school

- Governors have not stringently held leaders to account for the quality of education provided by the school. Governors have been distracted by their attempts to secure sustainability for the school. Challenge of senior leaders has lapsed in recent times.
- Governors have worked with the local authority and Diocese of Exeter, embracing the need to find a successful alliance with other schools while maintaining the school's aims and values. However, the school's use of external support has not been effective in securing improved outcomes for pupils.
- Governors acknowledge that they have been too slow to adapt to curriculum changes and that the school has not dealt with areas for improvement identified at the previous inspection.
- Governors do not have sufficient information to analyse accurately the impact of the use of the pupil premium funding. A high proportion of pupils qualify for additional funding but the school does not use it effectively to ensure that disadvantaged pupils achieve well in English and mathematics.
- Governors' monitoring and analysis of poor attendance is detailed but actions are not yet having a positive impact.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Leaders have created a culture where safeguarding is seen as everyone's responsibility. Staff protect pupils against a range of possible risks. Staff are trained and familiar with procedures necessary in the event of an incident. Staff know the pupils well.
- Administrative staff complete and keep up to date all the necessary checks on the suitability of staff, volunteers and visitors to the school. Leaders and governors check these processes thoroughly.
- The school is proactive in working with other agencies to keep children from harm. The safety of vulnerable pupils is improved as a result of this work. Pupils are safe and articulate clearly how the school supports them to stay safe online.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Inadequate

- The quality of teaching has declined since the previous inspection. Leaders and teachers do not sufficiently take account of what pupils know, understand and can do. As a result, teaching fails to ensure that pupils make enough progress in their writing and mathematics from their different starting points.
- Teaching is poorly planned across the school. Teachers do not teach skills and concepts methodically. For example, where older pupils carried out a science investigation on forces, teachers did not ensure that pupils used and practised skills appropriate to their age.
- Leaders do not possess a strategic overview of mathematics teaching and the school

has not responded fast enough to the demands of the new curriculum for mathematics. Recent changes target those who need to catch up but teaching to develop pupils' reasoning and problem-solving in mathematics is not developed well enough.

- Teachers' expectations of what the most able pupils can achieve are too low. Frequent changes of staff have made problems associated with weak teaching more profound. Teachers' questioning does not consistently challenge the most able pupils and teachers' checks on pupils' understanding are not as effective as they could be. Pupils say their experience of learning is highly variable. The older most able pupils recognise that they are not challenged in mathematics and that work is often too easy.
- Pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities do not make enough progress in key areas of learning. Teaching assistants sensitively manage and support these pupils in class but the lack of a clear, strategic overview for these pupils restricts their rate of progress.
- Disadvantaged pupils, while clearly identified in teachers' planning, do not typically receive the support required in writing and mathematics lessons they need to catch up quickly. Disadvantaged pupils are better supported in reading.
- Pupils' experience of writing across the curriculum is too limited. They have limited opportunities to write in subjects such as science, history, geography and religious education. Expectations from teachers are far too low. In upper key stage 2, teachers fail to identify clearly ways forward in writing which are appropriate to the pupils' age. Teachers do not apply the school's agreed feedback policy consistently enough. In key stage 1, pupils with low starting points make some progress in writing. However, it is not as rapid as it needs to be due to low expectations of positive attitudes to learning.
- In a small minority of classes, a good range of techniques develop pupils' conceptual understanding in mathematics effectively. Teachers extend pupils' thinking and the feedback they receive addresses their misconceptions. As a result, their progress is stronger.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Inadequate

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare requires improvement.
- Pupils' self-awareness in social situations and their understanding of what is required to be successful learners is not well developed.
- Leaders work hard to ensure that the relatively high proportion of vulnerable pupils in the school are well cared for. Staff know these pupils well and systems are effective in developing a deeper understanding of some pupils' complex needs.
- Pupils benefit from PE and school sport where the teaching is ambitious and influences healthier lifestyles. Pupils who are disengaged from learning are targeted for extra support. This is effective in boosting their self-esteem.
- Guided activities help pupils to reflect on their actions. Along with increased physical activities before the school day starts, initiatives exist to engage families to promote

positive attitudes to fundamental areas such as drinking, eating, sleeping and moving well. Younger pupils can confidently explain which foods are healthy and which foods are not.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is inadequate.
- Pupils' poor attitudes to learning have a negative impact on the progress they make. In too many classes, teachers do not do enough to encourage positive attitudes to learning.
- A significant minority of pupils show a lack of respect for each other and staff. Too many pupils have a negative attitude towards good manners, which impairs lesson time from being used productively. Expectations for good behaviour are stronger in Reception and Year 3.
- A high level of absence across the school is having a significant negative impact on the progress pupils make. Attendance is low for all pupils and specific groups of pupils, including those pupils who are disadvantaged. The levels of persistent absence are well above those found nationally. Recent initiatives to improve school attendance, while positive, have not yet brought about consistent improvement.
- Pupils typically behave well during break and lunchtimes. They say staff deal quickly with bullying if it happens.

Outcomes for pupils

Inadequate

- Outcomes are inadequate because pupils make too little progress. Pupils do not attain well compared to their peers nationally at the end of key stage 2. In writing and mathematics, progress is consistently weak and shows little sign of improvement.
- In mathematics, pupils' attainment and progress have been in the bottom 20% of schools nationally for the last two years. The proportion of pupils achieving a higher standard in mathematics declined from 2016 to 2017. It remains well below the national average.
- The progress of current pupils in mathematics is not rapid enough. This is particularly the case for the most able pupils who are not sufficiently challenged by teachers.
- Relatively high numbers of pupils are disadvantaged or have SEN and/or disabilities. These pupils are not monitored carefully enough and have not made the progress expected from their starting points in writing and mathematics. Currently, leaders and teachers are not doing enough to support these pupils to improve their achievement.
- Pupils' achievement in reading is much better than in writing and mathematics. Pupils' progress by the end of key stage 2 improved from 2016 to 2017. Their attainment in reading improved from below the national average in 2016 to broadly in line with the national average in 2017. Pupils demonstrate greater depth in their reading than they do in writing or mathematics.
- Standards for children in the early years foundation stage declined each year from 2014 to 2016. This trend reversed in 2017. The proportion of children achieving a good

level of development improved and is now above the national average.

- The proportion of pupils achieving the standard expected in the Year 1 phonics screening check was high in 2016 but declined significantly in 2017. Current pupils are developing their knowledge and application of phonics skills but teachers' expectations are not high enough and this slows the progress that pupils make.
- This year's national assessments at the end of key stage 1 showed an increase in standards in reading, writing and mathematics. For current pupils, progress in mathematics is slow and limited in Year 1 but better in Year 2 where there is greater coverage of mathematics content by pupils.
- Although outcomes for pupils in reading are positive, weak levels of attainment and progress in writing and mathematics by the end of Year 6 mean that pupils are not well prepared for the next stage of their education.

Early years provision

Requires improvement

- Teaching in Reception does not effectively capture what children can do, know and understand. As a result, teachers do not have sufficient information to help them plan their teaching and children's progress is not as rapid as it could be. Adult support is not sufficiently focused to ensure that the most able children are regularly challenged.
- Children's progress is strong in reading but weak in writing and number. Children do not build on their phonics knowledge and practise early writing skills enough.
- Disadvantaged children are clearly identified as a priority group in the early years but teachers are failing to ensure that they make the rapid progress required in key areas of learning.
- Teachers do not make good use of the excellent outdoor space as a learning resource. Children's experience of exploring and making choices in their learning is restricted as a result.
- Children are safe and well cared for. They mix well with each other and have strong relationships with the adults supporting them. The environment is welcoming and children typically engage enthusiastically with their learning.
- Teachers have established effective routines to encourage positive behaviour in Reception. Children respond well to teachers' expectations but when tasks are less challenging their attitudes are less positive.
- After several years of decline in the proportion of children achieving a good level of development, results in 2017 improved to being above the national average.
- Strong links with the local pre-school have a positive impact on children's transition to the Reception class. Parents are supportive and appreciative of this aspect of the school.

School details

Unique reference number	113406
Local authority	Devon
Inspection number	10042680

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	187
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Hilary Price
Acting Headteacher	Sarah Cate
Telephone number	01803 864695
Website	www.totnes-st-johns-primary.devon.sch.uk
Email address	admin@tsjprimary.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	3–4 July 2014

Information about this school

- The school does not meet requirements on the publication of information on its website. The website was under construction during the inspection.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in English and mathematics by the end of Year 6.
- Totnes St John's Church of England Primary School is smaller than the average-sized primary school. There are seven classes.
- The proportion of pupils eligible for pupil premium funding is higher than the national average.
- The proportion of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities is higher than the national average.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed pupils' learning across the school. Some of these visits were made jointly with the headteacher.
- The inspection team looked at pupils' work from all year groups and across a range of subjects.
- The inspection team talked to pupils from different year groups about how they feel about school, how teachers help them with their learning and how the school keeps them safe.
- The inspection team held discussions with school leaders, staff, and members of the governing body. The inspectors also took into account responses to questionnaires completed by staff and pupils.
- The inspection team looked at the school's evaluation of its own performance, its improvement plan, a number of key school policies and the minutes of meetings of the governing body. They also considered a range of documentation in relation to child protection, safeguarding, behaviour and attendance.
- The inspectors listened to a selection of pupils read.
- The inspectors took account of 55 responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, including a number of free-text responses. The inspectors also spoke to a number of parents during the inspection.

Inspection team

Mike Brady, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Jennifer Walker

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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