

The Cathedral Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School, Chelmsford

Victoria Road, Chelmsford, Essex CM1 1PA

Inspection dates

14–15 March 2018

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

- Leaders' actions have not secured consistently strong outcomes in writing and mathematics across the school.
- The school's self-evaluation is too generous. Leaders are not using information about the quality of teaching and pupils' learning to make effective decisions or to respond quickly to emerging concerns.
- Leaders have been too slow to support new staff or those who are teaching a new age range well enough to ensure consistently good teaching. This hampers pupils' progress.
- The teaching of writing and mathematics is not consistently strong. Some teachers' subject knowledge is not secure. Misconceptions are not addressed quickly and pupils do not practise their English and mathematics skills in other subjects regularly.
- Some teachers do not have high enough expectations of their pupils. They too readily accept work that is poorly presented and over which pupils have not taken care.
- Too many teachers do not plan work that consistently meets the needs of the pupils. As a result, some pupils are fidgety, distracted and do not make the progress they are capable of.
- Many middle leaders are new to their post and therefore it is too early to see the impact of their work on pupils' achievement.
- Safeguarding requirements are fit for purpose. However, information held in records is not of high quality.
- Governors have been too reliant on the information the headteacher provides them with. They do not routinely challenge the impact of her decisions on pupils' outcomes.

The school has the following strengths

- Parents support the school. Pupils are well cared for. They get off to a good start in the early years, enjoy school, and attend regularly.
- The strong leadership of the two deputy headteachers supports the headteacher very effectively.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching so that it is consistently good by ensuring that:
 - teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve in writing and mathematics are increased so that the proportion of pupils meeting and exceeding standards expected for their age matches that in reading
 - teaching builds on what pupils know, can do and understand, so that pupils' work is neither too easy or too hard
 - teachers' subject knowledge in writing and mathematics continues to improve so that they plan work for pupils that is appropriate to their age and stage
 - teachers ensure that pupils are given opportunities to apply their basic English and mathematics skills and knowledge in other subjects
 - teachers make effective use of teaching and learning support assistants to ensure the consistently good progress of pupils who are struggling or who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities
 - teachers make clear the expectations they have of pupils' handwriting and presentation so that all pupils take pride in their written work.

- Improve the impact of leadership so that:
 - leaders make effective use of all monitoring information to better inform decision-making, and that they check regularly on the impact of their actions on pupils' achievement
 - leaders' checks on teaching, learning and assessment take into account all groups of pupils so that underachievement is eliminated
 - inconsistencies in the quality of provision in mixed-age classes is eliminated
 - senior leaders make effective use of the existing expertise to support teaching, learning and assessment across the school
 - middle leaders continue to develop teachers' subject knowledge in areas of the curriculum such as science, geography and history
 - the teaching of handwriting is consistent throughout the school
 - governors hold the headteacher to account firmly for ensuring that safeguarding record-keeping is of a consistently high quality and routinely challenge the impact of her decisions on pupils' achievement.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

Although leaders and governors have identified that pupils' achievement is inconsistent across the school, they have not acted swiftly enough to address some pupils' lack of progress or poor attainment.

- The headteacher's view of the school's current performance is too generous. Leaders have therefore not tackled inconsistencies in the provision, especially the quality of teaching evident in some classes. Consequently, some pupils are not making the progress that they are capable of.
- Leaders' checks on teaching, learning and assessment provide teachers with targeted feedback. However, leaders do not always follow this up to see the impact it has on pupils' outcomes. As a result, pupils' progress in writing and mathematics is too slow, particularly in key stage 1.
- Leaders' systems to track pupils' achievement are developing well, for example the 'headteacher's tea' to talk with pupils about their learning, meetings to discuss pupils' progress, and scrutiny of pupils' work in their books. However, the wealth of information that is gathered is not used well by leaders and governors to inform decision-making and act rapidly to emerging concerns.
- The school has clearly invested in a considerable amount of training for individual members of staff. The impact of that can be seen more clearly in some than in others. For example, senior leaders are excellent role models. The relatively recent work that they have done to mentor and coach less experienced members of staff has not yet had sufficient time to impact on the quality of teaching. There is also good practice, for example in the upper school. This is not shared widely or regularly enough to influence all teachers.
- Middle leadership is in its early stages of development because so many teachers are new to their roles. A considerable change in responsibilities and teachers being unfamiliar with the year groups they are currently teaching has resulted in many teachers not having secure subject knowledge. As a result, planning in subjects such as science, history and geography does not ensure consistently good progress for pupils.
- Leaders have ensured that there is a broad and balanced curriculum, which is enriched by regular trips and visitors to the school. Pupils have the opportunity to develop their skills well in such subjects as religious education, physical education (PE), and art.
- The leader responsible for the sport premium funding has ensured that pupils receive specialist coaching in a wide variety of sports. As a result, there has been an increase in the number of pupils who attend after school clubs, and a considerable degree of success in inter-school competitions.
- Leaders responsible for additional funding for disadvantaged pupils and those who have SEN and/or disabilities have ensured that the extra funding is suitably allocated and monitored. For example, pupils receive extra support in speech and language therapy, counselling or development of social skills, as well as in reading, writing and

mathematics. However, the progress of SEN pupils is inconsistent, of which the new leader for this area of the school's work is aware.

- Pupils' social, moral, spiritual and cultural development is strong and leaders promote British values effectively. Teachers and leaders plan activities that pupils take part in, for example to raise money for charities and to support others who are less well off than themselves.
- Parents are overwhelmingly supportive of the school. The vast majority who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire, agreed that their children are happy and safe, and that they would recommend The Cathedral school to other parents. 'I have nothing but positive things to say', said one parent, while another commented, 'I highly recommend the school.'

Governance of the school

- Governors, many of whom, including the chair of governors, are new to their roles, have a developing understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. They keep up to date with information that they receive from school leaders in meetings and in reports.
- Although governors ask questions and challenge leaders, instances of this seen in governing body minutes of meetings are minimal. They are therefore, sometimes over reliant on the information the headteacher presents them with. As a result, they do not regularly check on and challenge the impact of her actions on improving teaching and learning and pupils' outcomes.
- Governors hold leaders to account for the use of additional funding for pupils who are disadvantaged and those who have SEN and/or disabilities. Governors are provided with all of the information they need to ensure that this additional funding, and sport premium, is used wisely to influence pupils' academic and pastoral outcomes.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. The checks that leaders make on the suitability of adults to work with children, are fit for purpose.
- The designated safeguarding leader works with a variety of external agencies to minimise pupils' risk of serious harm. Staff know what to do if they have a concern about a pupil's well-being. Referrals are quickly followed up by leaders to keep pupils safe from harm. However, the safeguarding records are not sufficiently well organised, nor is written recording of high quality.
- Governors take their safeguarding duties very seriously. The safeguarding governor meets with the designated leader regularly to monitor the school's safeguarding and child protection procedures. However, governors have not picked up inconsistencies in systems to secure effective record-keeping of safeguarding documentation.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- The leadership of teaching, learning and assessment has been and remains too variable. Although leaders have identified inconsistencies in the quality of teaching across classes and year groups, they have not acted quickly enough. As a result, pupils' progress is too variable, particularly in writing and mathematics.
- Some teachers do not have sufficiently high expectations of their pupils. Teachers do not use information they have about what pupils know, can do and understand to plan work that matches their needs and challenges them. As a result, the progress of many pupils, particularly those in lower and middle school, is inconsistent over time.
- There is variability in the quality of teaching of writing. Some teachers do not take into account provision across mixed-age classes when planning learning. Consequently, pupils with different starting points receive similar work which is either too easy or too hard for them.
- Pupils in the lower school are not given regular opportunities to write at length and to use their basic English skills and knowledge. However, teaching of writing in the upper school is sharply focused on developing pupils' writing skills. There are many examples of pupils using a variety of techniques in their writing, effectively and with accuracy. For example, one pupil who described her love of Roald Dahl books, wrote in one of her stories, 'With an ear-splitting thump, the Zrates landed on the cream carpet in an ashly mess.' Another boy when comparing a man's attire wrote, 'It coincidentally contrasted with the pristine-clear room.'
- Some work has been done to ensure that better teaching of mathematics is improving pupils' mathematical skills. Even so, the teaching does not yet regularly provide opportunities for pupils to use these skills in problem solving and reasoning. Also, teachers do not identify pupils' misconceptions quickly enough and intervene appropriately to remedy them. The strongest teaching of mathematics is in Years 5 and 6. This is because these teachers have secure subject knowledge, know their pupils very well and plan work that builds on pupils' prior knowledge. Increasingly these pupils are using their reasoning skills to solve problems and to think more deeply about what they are learning.
- Some teachers do not use the teaching and learning support assistants effectively. These additional adults are not always able to support pupils who are struggling in their learning or whose activities do not build on their existing skills and knowledge. This is not picked up quickly enough by teachers who are less experienced with the year group they are teaching. As a result, some pupils lose focus and can disrupt the learning of those around them.
- There is no evident, systematic teaching of handwriting. Consequently, younger pupils' work is often very messy and little care is taken in the presentation of their work. In upper school, teachers insist on good presentation and handwriting, with pupils earning their 'pen licence' when they can demonstrate that they are taking care and pride in their written work.
- The teaching of reading is effective. Some teachers in middle and upper school engender a love of books, using the reading of a class novel to inspire and motivate

pupils. As one pupil said, 'I love Roald Dahl because he uses his imagination so well', while another really liked the story lines in Michael Morpurgo books, using his style in his own writing.

- The teaching of phonics is regular and effective. It enables pupils to attempt, often successfully, to recognise unfamiliar words. Pupils also make sensible guesses at how to spell words in their writing.

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 confident and extremely polite in the way they speak to and show respect for adults and each other.
- Pupils say they feel safe in school and know who to go to if they have anything that is worrying them. They know how to keep themselves safe on the internet because they are taught how to and reminded regularly by the many posters and signs on the corridor walls.
- Pupils say that bullying is rare and they cannot remember the last time that an incident occurred. Parents agree that the school deals well with any bullying concerns, where they have had any experience of them.
- Leaders encourage pupils to live healthily and make sensible choices about the foods they eat and the exercise they take. An example of this linking to computing was evident during one inspection. Pupils collected data during a physical education lesson which showed resting and working heart rates. They then produced a graph in the computing lesson that followed showing the results of their physical exercise.
- Pupils enjoy a wide range of sports in school. There is an impressive display of cups and trophies that individuals and teams have won in competitions. There is an array of opportunities for pupils to partake in such after-school sports activities as tennis, football, swimming, golf and ballroom dancing.
- Leaders encourage pupils to look after each other and to take pride in the roles they have. Members of the school council, sports ambassadors, play leaders and music monitors undertake their roles responsibly. One school councillor said of the importance of his role, 'Everyone in the school counts.'
- Absence and persistent absence of pupils is below the national average for the vast majority of pupils. Leaders work well with parents and external agencies to support the very few families for whom getting to school regularly and on time is proving a challenge. The impact of this work can be seen for individual pupils.
- Pupils are developing their understanding of faiths and cultures different to their own. They are learning about British values including tolerance and respect and are well prepared for life in modern Britain, about which one pupil said, 'It is good to be part of something great.'

Behaviour

- The behaviour of the vast majority of pupils is good.
- Pupils conduct themselves well as they move between classes, to assemblies and going out to play.
- Leaders have worked hard to ensure that the revisited behaviour policy is being consistently implemented throughout the school. Leaders recognise that this is more embedded within key stage 2 than it is in key stage 1 and are supporting adults to manage some pupils' challenging behaviours.
- Relationships between adults and pupils are very positive. Pupils respond well to adults' instructions, and settle well to their work. Where there is a lack of clarity about what pupils should be doing or the work is not well matched to suit their needs, there is some fidgeting and lack of focus. As a result, positive learning behaviours for some pupils are not as evident in key stage 1.
- Pupils play well together supported by play leaders who teach pupils games like 'secret squirrel' to enjoy with their friends. Older pupils are 'buddies' for younger pupils, which is clearly welcomed by parents. As one said, 'The school uses the buddy system and it has been invaluable to my daughter being happy at school, as her buddy has looked after her very well.'
- Parents say that behaviour is managed well by adults in the school, and that their children are happy, safe and well-cared for. Many parents responded to Ofsted's online survey. Their comments were many and almost all were very positive. These include: 'A wonderfully warm and friendly school which has enabled my daughter to flourish and grow not only educationally but emotionally too' and 'The staff and teachers go the extra mile for the children's educational and pastoral needs.'

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- Pupils' progress is too inconsistent as they move through the school. Although leaders have picked up this inconsistency, they have not acted quickly enough to ensure that all pupils achieve as well as they can.
- Pupils in some mixed-age classes are not given work that builds on what they know, can do and understand. Some pupils therefore, in these mixed-age classes, underachieve, particularly in writing and mathematics.
- Pupils' outcomes in writing are too variable across the school. Progress at the end of key stage 2 in 2017 lagged behind reading and mathematics. The proportion of pupils achieving the expected standard in writing at the end of key stage 1 in 2017 was also much lower than reading and mathematics and well below that of other pupils nationally. Pupils' writing in their books shows that there is little development and application of their writing in lessons other than English. Nor are there regular opportunities for pupils in key stage 1 and lower key stage 2 to write at length. Consequently, progress is slow and pupils do not achieve as well as they could.
- Outcomes in mathematics vary across the school. Pupils at the end of key stage 2 in 2017 achieved well. Pupils in Year 2 in 2017 achieved below the national average in the

standard expected of them and in the proportion of pupils who achieved greater depth. Pupils' progress across the school is inconsistent. Some lower key stage 2 pupils are not building sufficiently well on their previous skills, knowledge and understanding. They are, therefore, underachieving and have gaps in their knowledge. Pupils in key stage 1 are not systematically developing the understanding of basic mathematical skills. As a result, many are not making sufficient progress and are not on track to achieve as well as they should by the end of the key stage in 2018.

- The proportion of pupils meeting the expected standard in the Year 1 phonics check has risen for the last three years and in 2017 was above the national average. Pupils use their skills with a good degree of accuracy in both their reading and writing.
- The proportion of children reaching a good level of development has increased over the last three years and is above the national average. Children make good progress so that they are well prepared for their move into key stage 1.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils is too small to make meaningful comparisons of this group to other pupils nationally. However, disadvantaged pupils across the school make similar progress to their peers and are well supported pastorally.
- Pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities make inconsistent progress across the school. Some pupils find it hard to tackle the work because it is too hard for them or the support they receive is not well directed. Other pupils, however, make strong progress in their academic work and socially, ensuring that they are ready to learn.
- Reading outcomes at key stages 1 and 2 are stronger than in writing and mathematics. In 2017, the proportion of pupils at the end of key stage 1 that achieved the expected standard and those who gained greater depth, was broadly in line with the national average. Progress of pupils at the end of key stage 2 in 2017 was in the top 20% of schools nationally. The proportion of pupils achieving the expected standard and those who achieved the higher score in 2017 was above the national average.

Early years provision

Good

- Leadership of the early years is strong. Leaders have a detailed understanding of each child, and plan learning that meets each child's needs and supports the next steps in their development.
- Teaching is good. The spacious area is a bright, stimulating and welcoming environment. Children are happy to explore activities themselves and to be given guidance by adults. As a result, children are confident, curious learners.
- Teachers plan a curriculum that is not only driven by children's interests, but also helps them to better understand the world around them. Children enjoy going on many visits, for example to the zoo, the city centre or the library. Leaders also ensure that there is an exciting programme of visitors to the school. For example, children were fascinated by a visit from a guide dog and his handler, and enjoyed the visit from a paramedic.

- Children learn the early skills of reading, writing and mathematics well. The early years area is well resourced with designated areas to allow children to practise these skills with confidence.
- Adults support children well by sensitively asking children questions to take their learning forward and to check on their progress. They intervene quickly to support those children whose skills are not as well developed, for example speech and language. As a result, those children make very good progress from their individual starting points.
- Children behave very well because the experienced adults have high expectations, but also because children control their own behaviour. They play well together and independently, sharing and taking turns on, for example, the outdoor climbing equipment.
- Links that leaders make with pre-schools, nurseries and parents ensure that the school knows children well when they join The Cathedral school. Parents are involved with their children's learning and welcome the online system the school uses to record children's progress and interests. As one parent among many said, 'My daughter started in Reception in September 2017, and she has settled in very well.' Another parent commented, 'We really appreciated the home visit before our daughter started the school.'
- Safeguarding in the early years is effective and statutory requirements met. Staff know families and individual children well and are quick to respond to any concerns they have.

School details

Unique reference number	115289
Local authority	Essex
Inspection number	10044471

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	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	315
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	The Right Reverend Nicholas Henshall
Headteacher	Linda Wiskin
Telephone number	01245 354 459
Website	www.cathedralschool.co.uk
Email address	head@cathedralschool.essex.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	30–31 January 2014

Information about this school

- The Cathedral school is larger than the average-sized primary school.
- Most pupils are White British.
- The proportion of pupils who are eligible for pupil premium funding is below the national average.
- The proportion of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities is below the national average. The proportion of pupils who have an education, health and care plan is above the national average.
- The school provides a breakfast club.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics.

Information about this inspection

- This inspection converted from a one-day section 8 inspection to a two-day inspection. The lead inspector identified concerns about safeguarding and how leaders record any identified concerns. A team of inspectors joined the lead inspector for the second day to conduct a section 5 inspection.
- Inspectors observed learning in 25 lessons in all classes in the school. Some of these observations were conducted jointly with the headteacher or one of the deputy headteachers. Inspectors looked at pupils' work in their books and spoke with pupils about their learning during these observations.
- Inspectors held meetings with a group of 10 pupils selected by the school, the chair of the governing body and two other governors, the headteacher, senior teachers and middle leaders, including the SEN coordinator. The lead inspector also had a telephone conversation with the governor responsible for safeguarding and a representative of the local authority.
- Together with inspectors, the middle leader and a deputy headteacher scrutinised a range of pupils' work in their English, mathematics and topic books.
- A range of information produced by the school was considered. This included information on pupils' progress and attainment, behaviour and attendance, and the headteacher's evaluation of the school's work. The lead inspector also considered reports from the headteacher and early years leader, governing body minutes of meetings and the school's raising attainment plan. External reports by the local authority were also considered.
- The lead inspector took into account the 135 responses to the online questionnaire, Parent View, with 70 texts from parents. An inspector also spoke to parents in the playground at the start of the day. Responses from staff to a survey conducted by the school were also taken into consideration.

Inspection team

Ruth Brock, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Henry Weir	Ofsted Inspector
Jane Ladner	Ofsted Inspector
Shân Oswald	Ofsted Inspector

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