

# St Andrew's Bulmer Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School

Church Road, Bulmer, Sudbury, Essex CO10 7EH

## Inspection dates

14–15 March 2018

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

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a good school

- The leadership team, including governors and the federation, is ensuring that necessary improvements in teaching, learning and assessment are taking place rapidly.
- The executive headteacher has built a strong, experienced team around her, using expertise from both schools in the federation to drive improvement.
- The good progress and improving attainment of current pupils are evident in books, displays and when talking with pupils. Information collected about pupils' performance shows a clear upward trajectory, including in early years.
- Since the previous inspection, areas identified for further improvement have been tackled well. These include attendance, which is now closer to the national average.
- Vulnerable pupils, including those who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities and disadvantaged pupils, are monitored closely and supported well by the SEN team. They are now making strong progress.
- Behaviour at the school, both in lessons and at play, is good. Pupils show respect towards others and support each other well. They enjoy school.
- Relationships are at the heart of this school. Pupils are known individually by all staff and are nurtured, supported and kept safe. Their well-being is given a high priority.
- The curriculum has been reviewed and is wide and interesting. It includes opportunities for art, music, geography, history, information and communication technology (ICT) and science. The curriculum is enhanced by visits and visitors.
- Pupils are taught how to be good citizens who can make a positive contribution to society. This includes a strong emphasis on British values and equality and diversity.
- Most-able pupils do not do as well as they could. Their historical attainment data has often been below national averages.
- Some parents and carers would value more regular and comprehensive information about any changes and developments taking place. Parents' views on the work of the school are not sought frequently.
- Basic skills, while taught, are not consistently reinforced. This includes handwriting, spelling and presentation. Mistakes are sometimes left unchecked.

## Full report

### What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Continue to improve the progress and attainment of pupils by:
  - insisting on high standards in all pieces of work and in all subjects
  - ensuring that staff tackle mistakes and misconceptions as they arise
  - providing suitably challenging and engaging tasks for the most able pupils.
- Improve leadership and management by:
  - providing more timely, accurate and comprehensive information to parents, including information on the federation
  - seeking the views of parents and pupils about the work of the school and using this to inform further improvement.

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management

**Good**

- The school is led by an executive headteacher who works across two schools. She joined the school in 2017 and has already taken decisive and successful action to improve the school. She is well supported by an executive deputy headteacher and other school leaders. They share expertise and staff across both schools, and this has already led to better progress and attainment for pupils in this rapidly improving school.
- The local authority has provided appropriate guidance and support to the school since its previous inspection in 2016. This includes staff training, monitoring, support for governors and the placement of an interim headteacher in post during some leadership turbulence. The local authority was instrumental in the appointment of the current executive headteacher.
- The school is part of a federation with St Giles' Primary school and is part of a wider consortium of 11 local schools, including the local secondary school. This collaborative working provides valuable support to the school. For example, teachers get together to check each other's assessments. The schools work together to provide training opportunities for staff and school leaders.
- There is a real team spirit at the school. Staff and school leaders, including governors, work together for the common good. Responses to Ofsted's online staff questionnaire indicate that staff feel well supported and are proud to work at the school. Effective professional development and coaching support are provided for staff and are linked to performance management. They are tailored both to their needs and the needs of the school. As a result, teaching, learning and assessment are now good overall.
- Additional funding for pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities is used well to improve outcomes and provision. The SEN team, which includes staff from both schools, is highly effective in identifying individual pupils' needs and providing appropriate support. As a result, these pupils are now making strong and improving progress. Any barriers to their learning are being addressed.
- Additional funding is carefully targeted to support disadvantaged pupils and to meet any needs they might have. As a result, these pupils are now making improved progress, which is resulting in better attainment.
- Additional funding for physical education (PE) and sport is used to employ a sports coach and to provide extra opportunities, which all pupils enjoy. These include sessions at a local gymnastics club as well as boccia and new age curling. Pupils really enjoy and appreciate these activities. The sports coach also provides training for school staff.
- Following a recent review, the wider curriculum at the school has been improved to include a broad range of whole-school themes. Within topics such as Ancient Times, pupils study Romans, Vikings and early civilisations. These are enhanced by visits such as a trip to Colchester Castle. Older pupils attend a residential trip to the Isle of Wight.
- Displays around the school reflect the range of curricular opportunities provided for pupils. These include Aspire to Sport in which pupils use their gymnastics skills to

demonstrate positive attributes, such as 'we reach for the sky'. Art and design activities, such as the three-dimensional Roman chariots in Years 3 and 4, are evident in all classes. An artist-in-residence attended the school recently and this resulted in an attractive, whole-school display of fishes representing St Andrew, the fisherman.

- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is a strength of the school. For example, during the inspection, an assembly focused on water and reducing the use of plastics. Pupils and staff pledged to reduce their use of single-use plastic bottles as they 'have the care of the world in their hands'. The rich curriculum and range of extra-curricular activities provide pupils with a number of artistic and musical opportunities. British values, including democracy, are also evident. Pupils have opportunities to vote on various issues which affect them.
- Equality and diversity are promoted well around the school. The Hindu festival of Holi was celebrated recently with a focus on being equal, with consideration given to both racism and poverty. The local reverend attends school regularly, and the youngest pupils were recently given the opportunity to ask her 'big questions'.
- Leaders have not sought the views of parents during a period of considerable change and development. As a result, their improvement planning is not informed by parental perspectives. Much encouragement was needed to get parents to complete Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View. The vast majority of parents who did respond were very supportive of the school. However, communication emerged as an area for improvement.
- The school's website contains a range of information for parents, such as school policies. However, some of this information is cursory or out of date. School leaders and governors agree that communication needs to be improved, and they have plans in place to improve the website and introduce social media.

## **Governance**

- Governors work closely with school leaders to drive improvement. The governing body has seen the school through some turbulent times, particularly with regard to the staffing and leadership structures. The stability that the governors have achieved is providing reassurance to parents and pupils.
- The governing body is enthusiastic and highly ambitious for the school and its pupils.
- Governors know the school and its community well. They are regular visitors to classrooms, and minutes from their meetings demonstrate both support and challenge for school leaders. They are well aware of school priorities and are wholly committed to school improvement. They understand that good-quality teaching, learning and assessment are key to the school's success and, with the headteacher, have organised support and training for staff where needed.
- Governors monitor the impact of additional funding closely. Governors with responsibility for areas such as SEN, sport and the progress of disadvantaged pupils are knowledgeable about how the funding is spent and whether it is working. They are able to provide examples of successful interventions and of when approaches had to be changed because they were not working well.

- Governors acknowledge that communication with parents about the improvements being made at the school could be better. They have had some technical issues with the school website, and plans are under way to significantly improve the information available to parents.
- Governors are reviewing the school's policies in order to streamline them across both schools and bring them up to date and in line with current legislation.

## Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Keeping pupils safe is given a suitably high priority at St Andrew's School. Pupils reported that they feel safe and they are aware of issues such as online safety and bullying. Pupils reported that bullying hardly ever happens at their school. School logs on bullying and prejudicial incidents support this view. Bullying incidents are very rare.
- Safeguarding systems, procedures and policies are robust and known to all adults working with pupils. Regular staff training raises awareness, and current government legislation is closely followed. The designated leaders for safeguarding and child protection undertake additional training and follow county safeguarding guidance.
- Checks on all adults working with pupils are undertaken as required, and the single central record of these checks held by the school is now thorough and up to date. Leaders quickly addressed some omissions identified during the inspection.
- Safeguarding is described by the executive headteacher as 'part of everything that we do' and an 'equal and shared responsibility'. Multi-agency working is thorough and followed up where necessary by school leaders. Weekly meetings raise any concerns, and the safeguarding team is tenacious in following up any issues raised.
- Parents reported that their children are kept safe. Recent changes in pick-up procedures for parents at the end of the school day have improved safeguarding procedures.

## Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

**Good**

- Leaders have identified relevant teaching, learning and assessment priorities and put plans in place to address these. These plans, known to all staff, are already having an impact on pupils' achievement. For example, a planning review has resulted in better planning for the progress of individuals and groups.
- Investment in staff training and subsequent checks on the accuracy of assessments are having an impact on teachers' confidence when judging pupils' work. An external moderator was brought in to support and train staff, and the school works with other schools in the consortium to share expertise and professional development. The assessment of pupils' work is now more accurate as a result.
- Most teaching is now good. Lesson observations, work in books and information collected about current pupils' performance indicate that teaching and learning are

effective over time. Pupils enjoy their lessons, and this is reflected in their good behaviour and readiness for learning.

- The curriculum is well planned, interesting and enjoyed by pupils. The wide range of subjects that are taught regularly and which link to whole-school topics results in some high-quality work.
- Pupils are provided with regular opportunities to practise their literacy and mathematical skills in a range of subjects, such as history, science and design technology. In Year 2, pupils apply their writing skills to history work on Florence Nightingale.
- Teaching assistants support pupils well. They are appropriately trained and use questioning skilfully to extend learning and make pupils think. They know the pupils very well and show great care for their well-being. Teachers and teaching assistants support each other and work flexibly as a team to provide varied teaching approaches that help pupils learn well.
- The support provided for all groups of pupils has improved since the previous inspection. Different levels of challenge are provided for pupils with different starting points. Those falling behind are provided with support to catch up. This includes those pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities and disadvantaged pupils.
- The teaching of phonics is now good. Results in the Year 1 phonics screening check in 2017 improved to be above the national average for the first time in three years. Pupils use their phonics knowledge well when reading and show both confidence and enthusiasm when decoding unfamiliar words.
- Most-able pupils are sometimes provided with additional challenges and more difficult activities to meet their needs. This is particularly evident in the Year 5/6 class, where the Workshop provides daily challenge activities such as those seen in robotics, an extension of the class work on electricity.
- In some lessons, most-able pupils are not challenged or engaged sufficiently. Instead, they are given slightly harder tasks, which are still relatively easy for them to complete. This can result in a loss of interest. At times, they have to wait too long for others to catch up before being offered further challenges.
- Some staff do not have high enough expectations about the quality of basic skills. Mistakes in handwriting, spelling, punctuation and letter formation are sometimes overlooked. This results in bad habits being formed and misconceptions being perpetuated. While some work, such as that of older pupils and work on display, is now well presented, some work in pupils' books continues to show a lack of care.

## Personal development, behaviour and welfare

**Good**

### Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils' positive attitudes to learning, conduct, a polite and respectful approach to each other and cooperation are notable. This is a strength of the school. It is reinforced daily

by all staff, who show care and concern for all pupils and their well-being.

- The school environment has been improved and now provides welcoming and attractive surroundings in which pupils learn. Leaders have developed the library and outside areas. They have further plans in place to develop the outdoor learning area for the youngest class. Pupils appreciate the improvements and said, 'We love the new library space' and, 'If the school is decorated right through, new children would definitely want to come here.'
- Classrooms are safe places where pupils' emotional well-being is secure. They feel able to 'have a go' without fear of failure. Their contributions are valued and respected by adults and their peers. Pupils are kind and considerate to one another.
- Assemblies reinforce key messages about social, moral, spiritual and cultural issues and help to engender a strong sense of community. Pupils are encouraged to think about their hopes, aspirations, wishes or prayers for the world and themselves.
- In some classes, the progress pupils make in lessons slows as pupils are too passive. They wait for adults to support them or move them on with learning. This is particularly the case when pupils find work too easy.
- Most pupils take pride in their work. However, because teachers' expectations are not consistently high, there are some pupils whose work lacks care.

## **Behaviour**

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- No lessons were disrupted by poor behaviour during the inspection. School logs reinforce this view. Low-level disruption is rare, and pupils' attitudes towards the learning activities provided for them are generally positive. Pupils conduct themselves well at all times.
- Pupils behave well both in lessons and around the school. At breaktimes, pupils of all ages play well together, sharing play equipment and teaching one another new skills. Lunchtimes are sociable, orderly occasions when pupils enjoy chatting over a healthy, freshly cooked school lunch.
- Adults are skilled at recognising when pupils require support. In this nurturing environment, pupils thrive and learn respect and care. They know how to behave well.
- Attendance, which was below average for the past two years, is rising steadily. Case studies show that pupils with historic persistent absence are now improving their rates of attendance. The overall school percentage of absence is still above average, but the gap is closing. Some of this is due to unauthorised term-time holiday absence, which the school is tackling effectively.

**Outcomes for pupils**

**Good**

- Historic attainment and progress data, which must be read with caution due to the small numbers of pupils involved, indicate a legacy of underperformance over several years. Published attainment data at the end of key stages 1 and 2 was too low in 2016, and below average in all subjects and for most groups. Despite improvements in key stage 2 in 2017, attainment in writing and mathematics at the end of key stage 1 remained low. Leaders have taken effective action to rectify this.
- The progress and attainment of current pupils are improving rapidly due to an increasing focus on high-quality teaching, learning and assessment. Most pupils are now making good or accelerated progress, which is allowing them to close the attainment gaps between them and their peers nationally. This is particularly evident in Years 5 and 6.
- Pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities and disadvantaged pupils are also accelerating their rates of progress. This is due to the effective support of the SEN team, which identifies, monitors and supports these pupils well. As a result, these pupils are closing any gaps between them and their peers.
- Phonics outcomes in 2017 were above the national average, which is a considerable improvement on recent years when they were sometimes well below. Current pupils are making good progress towards continuing this trend. Pupils who read with the inspector enjoy books and read well using their phonics skills.
- In a wide range of subjects, the quality of work is improving. Pupils are developing their English and mathematics skills well. These are now applied in other subjects. More pupils than before are working at age-related expectations.
- Pupils are now given work which is better matched to their starting points. Extra support is provided for those falling behind, and extra work is given to those working towards the higher standards. However, the challenge activities for the most able are not always difficult enough to extend their learning.

## Early years provision

**Good**

- Children enter the school with varying starting points, which are swiftly assessed by the early years team. Any additional needs are quickly identified and interventions put in place if required. Children are well supported and prepared for Year 1.
- An attractive and effective learning environment is evident, which facilitates independence, engagement and focus. Children enjoy the range of activities on offer, some of which they tackle independently, while others are facilitated by adults, with modelling of the effective use of language and new vocabulary. Children enjoy their learning and make strong progress.
- The early years team is cohesive, and staff work together well in support of children's learning. Adults' questioning skills are effective in extending learning and deepening understanding. Children enjoy working with the adults who are supportive, nurturing and interested in them. Safety and welfare requirements are met and given a high priority.
- Behaviour is good, and children learn to work together, listen and respond. During



independent play, children were observed playing outside with ramps and cars, measuring the distance they were travelling along a track they had marked and numbered themselves. An adult sensitively intervened when there was a dispute, but responsibility remained with the boys to resolve it themselves, which they did.

- Investment has been made in improvements to the outdoor environment, which forms part of the early years classroom. Staff make best use of the area, which includes raised beds for planting and growing, with the resources currently available. There are further plans to invest more in this area, which is much accessed and enjoyed by the children.
- Parents contribute to an online tracking system, which includes photographs, observations, comments and links to the early years curriculum. Feedback provided to the inspector from parents indicates that this helps them to better understand how well their child is doing.
- Phonics is systematically taught in the early years. The class teacher is thorough in ensuring that children use their mouths to form letters and sounds correctly. This translates into better sound representation when children use their phonic knowledge to write.
- Children are taught basic skills such as how to hold a pencil and form letters. When they go on to use these skills in a wider context, mistakes such as letter reversals are sometimes overlooked, reinforcing bad habits. Capital letters are also evident in inappropriate places and finger spaces between words forgotten.
- Most-able children sometimes have to complete the same tasks as everybody else and are not moved on to more challenging work as quickly as they could be. This means that they make less rapid progress than they might.
- Staff collect a large amount of data on the children in their care. This is used to identify gaps in learning and skills of the group and to report on and assess their progress. It is not yet used strategically or with ambition to accelerate the progress of individuals.

## School details

Unique reference number	115067
Local authority	Essex
Inspection number	10044753

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Church of England (Voluntary controlled)
Age range of pupils	4– 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	49
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Penny Doe
Executive Headteacher	Jinnie Nichols
Telephone number	01787 372383
Website	office@sab.sgasa.uk
Email address	admin@bulmer-st-andrews.essex.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	17– 18 May 2016

## Information about this school

- This is a much smaller than average-sized school.
- The school federated with St Giles' Primary School in September 2017. The executive headteacher is the executive headteacher of both schools.
- The school has received support from the local authority, diocese and external consultants since the previous inspection.
- The school is part of a local consortium of 11 schools, including the local secondary school. The executive headteacher is the chair of this group.
- There has been a number of staffing changes since the previous inspection, including the leadership of the school.

## Information about this inspection

- During the inspection, a wide range of inspection activities was undertaken, many jointly with the executive headteacher.
- These included lesson observations, book scrutiny, a learning walk, discussions with pupils, discussions with staff and parents and scrutiny of a wide range of school documentation.
- Documentation included: safeguarding records and the single central record; leaders' monitoring of teaching, learning and assessment; governors' minutes; the school's self-evaluation and improvement plans; local authority reviews; diocesan reviews; attendance and performance data; performance management information; bullying and prejudicial logs and assessment information.
- Five responses to the Ofsted staff questionnaire were considered along with 17 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View. The Ofsted pupil questionnaire was not undertaken by the school.
- The inspector spoke with local authority representatives, the diocesan partner and members of the governing body, including the chair of governors.

## Inspection team

Jacqueline Bell-Cook, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate  
Store Street  
Manchester  
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 4234  
Textphone: 0161 618 8524  
E: [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)  
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