

Cherry Tree Academy

Holt Drive, Mersea Road, Colchester, Essex CO2 0BG

Inspection dates

1–2 May 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	Requires improvement
Outcomes for pupils	Requires improvement
Early years provision	Requires improvement
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- Leaders' view of the school's current effectiveness is too generous.
- Some leaders are new to post and their experience is variable.
- Progress made by different groups of pupils is not yet consistently good.
- Teaching does not secure good progress across the school. Teachers' use of questioning does not deepen pupils' knowledge and understanding.
- Pupils' spelling and writing remain areas for improvement. Teachers' verbal feedback on progress is not always helpful. Some pupils do not enjoy reading.
- Some parents and carers feel the school's communication with them could be improved.
- Extra-curricular provision is sparse. Opportunities for pupils to develop their leadership skills are not regularly provided.
- Pupils' low-level disruptive behaviour sometimes interrupts the flow of teaching and learning. Some pupils' work is poorly presented.
- The early years provision is undergoing change. Leadership of the early years is on an interim basis. The accuracy of assessments of children's progress over time is questionable.
- Early years staff have not had good quality phonics training.
- The early years outdoor space is under-developed.

The school has the following strengths

- The new school leaders have had some impact in improving the quality of the provision. Pupils' behaviour and attendance have improved.
- Pupils are very well guided and supported.
- The speech and language centre is effective in meeting pupils' needs.
- The school promotes pupils' social, moral, spiritual and cultural development well.
- Pupils are kept safe and safeguarding procedures are secure.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Strengthen leadership and management by:
 - ensuring greater accuracy in the evaluation of the school’s effectiveness in order to fine-tune school improvement planning
 - developing the skills of the middle leaders
 - ensuring the pupil premium funding is used to best effect in order to diminish the differences in the relevant pupils’ progress compared to other pupils nationally
 - enhancing the extra-curricular provision
 - improving the school’s communication with parents.
- Improve the quality of teaching and pupils’ outcomes by:
 - making sure that most-able pupils are stretched and challenged
 - making sure that all groups of pupils across all year groups make more rapid progress, particularly those who are disadvantaged and those who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities
 - improving the quality of teachers’ questioning
 - making sure that teachers’ verbal feedback to pupils about how to improve their work is more helpful
 - continuing to target pupils’ spelling and writing
 - encouraging pupils to read more for pleasure
 - expecting pupils to present their work more neatly
 - eradicating low-level disruptive behaviour in the classroom.
- Provide pupils with more roles and responsibilities to develop their leadership skills.
- Improve the early years provision by:
 - appointing a permanent early years leader
 - ensuring greater accuracy in the assessment of children’s progress
 - improving teachers’ questioning to deepen children’s thinking
 - providing phonics training to members of the support staff
 - improving the quality of the outdoor area.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- Leaders' actions have not yet secured good outcomes, consistently good teaching or wholly positive attitudes to learning in the classroom.
- The school's evaluation of its own effectiveness is overgenerous. Inspectors did not find sufficient evidence to support most of the judgements made. There is currently too much inconsistency within the provision.
- The extra-curricular provision is not strong. Although the school provides additional curricular activities through sport, there is nothing else to enhance the curriculum.
- Some parents who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire Parent View expressed negative views about the way in which the school communicates with them, particularly with regard to how well their child is achieving at the school. One parent wrote: 'I do feel the school lacks communication, which is vital.'
- The school's expenditure of pupil premium funding and additional funding for pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities has not yet secured consistently good progress for eligible pupils.
- Some time after the school opened, the trust addressed weaker leadership and teaching by restructuring the senior leadership team. The head of school and the executive headteacher now provide greater stability. As a result of this inspection, they realise that school improvement from such a low starting point takes time.
- The senior leaders and middle leadership team are committed to making the school better. They understand their roles and the middle leadership team is accountable to the senior leaders for its actions. Some of these leaders are relatively new to post. Continued support is therefore essential if they are to maximise their contribution.
- The relatively new leadership structure has demonstrated impact in some aspects of school improvement. For example, they have successfully reduced pupils' absence and have improved pupils' conduct. Pupils' progress and their attainment have improved since the academy's opening, but still fluctuate too much to be sustained over time.
- Teaching is managed well. Teachers are regularly observed, and areas of effective practice are identified. Areas for improvement are recorded on lesson observation forms and help leaders identify whole-school and individual training needs.
- Leaders who observed jointly with inspectors accurately evaluated the weaker aspects of teaching as well as stronger features.
- Staff who responded to the online questionnaire are positive about the school and the work of the school's leaders.
- The choice of subjects taught in the school is appropriate and ties in with the trust's chosen model for its curriculum. This model does not involve teachers marking classwork but places the emphasis on verbal feedback, and pupil peer and self-assessment. Additionally, half-termly projects have replaced the setting of homework.
- The school has used the physical education and sport premium well. The fund is used to employ a qualified sports coach who work with pupils of all ages to promote their

interest in sport and keeping fit. The sports coach conducts sports assessments. The school has also recently renewed its healthy schools accreditation.

- The school's promotion of pupils' social, moral, spiritual and cultural development is effective. Pupils know right from wrong and have a sound understanding of fundamental British values. Pupils are encouraged to voice their opinions and use the 'speak out' assemblies to express their views.

Governance of the school

- Governance has improved since the school opened. Weak governance has been addressed by forming a local governing body for this school and the other local school sponsored by the trust. More effective governors from both previous school governing bodies were retained to form one body for the two schools.
- Members of the small governing body conduct visits with a specific focus. For example, a recent visit in April looked at the progress of disadvantaged pupils in the school.
- Governors' minutes of meetings demonstrate a sound awareness of the school's strengths and weaknesses. There is, as yet, no parental representation on the governing body.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Staff have a secure awareness of matters relating to the safeguarding of children and training for designated safeguarding leads and other staff is up to date. Staff have received and read the statutory guidance related to safeguarding.
- The school's single central record of recruitment checks of staff is compliant with current requirements.
- Files relating to child protection matters are well ordered and are kept secure. Records provide comprehensive details of referrals to the local authority, use of external agencies and resolutions.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- Teaching does not consistently meet the needs of the most able pupils. Sometimes, most-able pupils do the same work as others in the class, when it is not appropriate to do so. This means they are not stretched and challenged. Most-able pupils told inspectors they would like harder work.
- Teachers do not always use questioning to best effect. They sometimes accept single word answers, including 'yes' or 'no'. Hence, pupils are not given the opportunity to fully demonstrate that they understand what they have learned, and they do not deepen their knowledge and understanding.
- Teaching has not yet secured good progress across the different year groups and across a wide range of subjects.
- Low-level disruptive behaviour continues to interrupt the flow of teaching in some lessons. While there are no major incidents of unacceptable behaviour, teachers have

to stop the lesson in order to implement the classroom behaviour policy, and this inevitably interrupts the flow of teaching.

- When teachers provide verbal feedback as to how pupils can improve their work, this is not always detailed or precise enough for pupils to understand how to make more rapid progress.
- When pupils were questioned by inspectors about their work, they were able to speak more about what they were doing, rather than what they were learning.
- Teachers are enthusiastic, committed and have good subject knowledge. They make effective use of a wide range of resources.
- Established systems are in place for teachers to measure pupils' progress towards their targets.
- Additional adults in the classroom work well with the pupils they are supporting. They help them settle down at the start of lesson, so that they are ready to learn.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Requires improvement

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- The school has established a strong pastoral support team. This team works well collaboratively to ensure that pupils' well-being is promoted effectively.
- Staff regularly welcome pupils at the school gate. They routinely look to see whether pupils arrive at the school distressed or if they are anxious, and then put appropriate procedures in place to ensure that these pupils get off to the best possible start.
- The 'Maple Room' plays a key role in supporting pupils who are vulnerable. Pupils who have emotional or behavioural needs are warmly welcomed into the 'Maple Room' at the start of the day and at lunch time. The work carried out here contributes to increasing pupils' confidence and self-esteem.
- The school's specialist-resourced provision for pupils who have speech, language and communication difficulties is effective and meets the needs of these pupils well.
- Pupils told inspectors they feel safe in the school and understand how to keep themselves safe.
- Pupils have a good understanding of different types of bullying, including cyber bullying. Although some bullying does occur, pupils feel they are able to report it and that it will be dealt with effectively.
- Apart from being members of the school council, there are not enough opportunities for pupils to develop their leadership skills or to contribute towards the work of the school.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement.
- There is too much low-level disruptive behaviour in lessons across the school. This is particularly the case in Year 6. Such behaviour includes: daydreaming; talking when the teacher is talking; not getting involved in the teaching activity; squabbling with other pupils; and fidgeting.
- Some pupils' books are messy, and presentation of work is sometimes poor.
- Major incidents of unacceptable behaviour have been reduced over time. Previously, the proportion of pupils excluded from school for fixed periods of time was well above the national average. The school's 'Maple Room', which aims to nurture pupils and address poor behaviour, has contributed towards the decline in major incidents.
- Pupils' attendance has also significantly improved since the school's opening. Attendance over time has reached and sometimes exceeded the national average. The school's leaders have worked hard to ensure that pupils attend school on a more regular basis.
- Pupils wear their uniform smartly and socialise well with each other at lunchtime and during morning break. They do not drop litter and the school is free from graffiti.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- Pupils' progress over time has been too variable and in some cases unacceptably low. In 2017, although pupils' attainment improved, their progress at the end of key stage 2 was well below national expectations in reading, below in mathematics and at the expected standard in writing. The proportion of pupils achieving the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics matched the national average at 61%.
- In 2017, the proportion of pupils in key stage 1 achieving at least the expected standard was broadly average in reading, below average in writing and above average in mathematics. The proportion of pupils achieving greater depth in reading, writing and mathematics was well below the national average.
- For the last two years, the proportion of pupils meeting the expected standard in the phonics screening check in Year 1 has been below the national average.
- Pupils' spelling remains a priority. Inspectors' scrutiny of pupils' books shows that many common words are misspelled. Additionally, pupils are still working to master spellings which would be expected to have been already mastered by pupils in lower years.
- The quality of pupils' writing is inconsistent. While inspectors saw some good examples of writing, including extended writing, other examples were limited in the range of vocabulary and were restricted to using short sentences.
- Pupils have access to reading, either in lessons or by using the school's library. When inspectors heard pupils read aloud, the quality of reading was mixed. Some pupils read from books which were age-appropriate, and others did not. In discussions, with inspectors, older pupils said they would like to read 'harder' books. Some pupils said they did not like reading at all.
- Inspectors' scrutiny of pupils' books across a range of subjects and year groups shows

that pupils' progress is inconsistent. Some of the more able pupils require more stretch and challenge in order for them to make rapid progress.

- The difference in the achievement of disadvantaged pupils in the school, including those who are most-able, and non-disadvantaged pupils nationally has not diminished sufficiently. Leaders are aware of this challenge and are constantly reviewing the impact of the pupil premium funding.
- The progress made by pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities is not yet consistently good.
- Scrutiny of the school's information on pupils' progress and a review of pupils' work show that outcomes over time are not yet consistently good across the school. The school's own assessment procedures suggest that outcomes for the current Year 6 pupils are likely to show some improvement.
- The school caters well for the small group of pupils in its speech and language centre. Staff work hard to ensure that these pupils are well supported to make gains in their learning and progress.

Early years provision

Requires improvement

- Leadership of the early years is at a transitional stage, as the previous post holder left the school and the head of school is currently overseeing this aspect of the provision. Although a new early years teacher has been appointed, she had only been working for eight days at the time of this inspection and was employed on a part-time basis.
- The quality of the outdoor area does not yet match that of the indoor space. Leaders are aware of this discrepancy, and state that the outdoor space is the next area to be improved.
- The accuracy of the assessments of children's progress is questionable. Inspectors found that, until recently, all children had been assessed in their learning journals as working at age 40 to 60 months in writing and in mathematics. This is in spite of the fact that children's attainment on entry was variable from child to child.
- Teachers' and support staff's questioning is not consistently used to extend children's learning. This means that children's knowledge and understanding are not sufficiently extended to secure strong progress.
- Children access and use a wide range of equipment and resources independently. Inspectors' scrutiny of pupils' work demonstrated that some progress has been made over the year, but that this is not yet consistently good.
- Children's behaviour is reasonable, but they still require ongoing reminders about the importance of listening to their teacher.
- Early years staff share information with parents and use information provided by parents to inform their planning. Not many parents engage with the school's online assessment system which reports on children's progress.
- The early years indoor space has a good range of suitable displays. These include useful vocabulary and also some celebration of children's work.
- By the end of Reception Year, children are suitably prepared for the start of Year 1. In

2017, 71% of children achieved a good level of development, matching the national average for the same year.

- Safeguarding is effective. Staff have a good understanding of safeguarding procedures and apply them well. Children are safe and happy in the setting and attend regularly.

School details

Unique reference number	142002
Local authority	Essex
Inspection number	10046617

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	177
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	David King
Executive Headteacher	Simon Webb
Telephone number	01206 575224
Website	www.cherrytree.essex.sch.uk
Email address	mailto:admin@cherrytree.essex.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.
- The school opened in September 2015. This is the school's first inspection. When the predecessor school Cherry Tree Primary School was last inspected by Ofsted, it was judged to require special measures.
- The school is sponsored by the Connected Learning multi-academy trust, which is formed of nine trustees. A local governing body oversees Cherry Tree Academy and Icení Academy. From September 2017, a new leadership team was put in place including an executive headteacher and a head of school.
- Cherry Tree Academy is smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- The school hosts a specialist-resourced provision called the Speech and Language Centre. It caters for up to 10 pupils. Pupils are typically integrated into mainstream classes and are only taken out of lessons for one-to-one or group activities.

- Most pupils are White British. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups and those who speak English as an additional language is well below the national average.
- An above-average proportion of disadvantaged pupils attend the school.
- The proportion of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities is above the national average as is the proportion of pupils who have a statement of special educational needs or an education, health and care plan.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in English and mathematics.

Information about this inspection

- This inspection was conducted with one day's notice.
- Inspectors observed pupils' learning in every class. Inspectors looked at pupils' books across a wide range of subjects and all year groups. Work scrutinised represented different groups of pupils in the school, including disadvantaged pupils, most-able disadvantaged pupils, higher-attaining pupils and pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities.
- Meetings were held with the chief executive officer of the trust, the executive headteacher and the head of school, subject leaders, different groups of pupils, and the chair and two additional members of the governing body. A telephone conversation took place with a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors scrutinised: school improvement documents; policies; information on pupils' progress; records of the quality of teaching; and information on pupils' behaviour and attendance. The single central record of recruitment checks of staff was also scrutinised.
- Inspectors considered 34 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire Parent View and 28 responses to the staff questionnaire. Ofsted also took account of three letters received from parents. There were no responses to the pupil survey.

Inspection team

John Daniell, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Ashley Best-White

Ofsted Inspector

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