

Heathlands Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School, West Bergholt

New Church Road, West Bergholt, Colchester, Essex CO6 3JF

Inspection dates

20–21 September 2018

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- Heathlands Primary School is an extremely caring, outward-looking and highly inclusive school. It is described accurately by one member of staff as having a 'village feel where you are part of a family'.
- The personal touch of the acting headteacher, ably supported by other staff, ensures that pupils' well-being comes first. Parents and carers are effusive about the care provided by the school.
- Pupils embody the Christian values of the school. They are kind, well-mannered and supportive, and celebrate each other's achievements. Their behaviour is exemplary.
- Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is a strength of the school. Pupils are highly reflective and engage in deep philosophical discussions with their teachers.
- Leaders, managers and governors are very ambitious for the pupils. As a result, teaching, learning and most pupils' progress are good. Staff are clear about leaders' ambitions and support them well.
- The teaching of phonics in key stage 1 is strong. Young pupils develop a love for reading early on. Attainment has been consistently high in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Leadership of the early years is very effective. Reception children respond enthusiastically and become engrossed in learning. Children make an excellent start to school life because of high-quality teaching.
- Effective workplace training has helped teachers to improve their teaching of writing. Key stage 2 pupils' fluency in writing has improved. However, they make too many errors with spelling, punctuation and grammar.
- The decline in reading progress with the older pupils is being addressed. Recent training for the teaching of reading skills is evident in lessons.
- Sometimes, the most able pupils in key stage 2 are not readily given the hardest work. As a result, they stand still in their learning. This was particularly noticeable in the teaching of mathematics.
- While there are strong systems to assess and analyse pupils' performance, leaders do not always readily address areas of weakness that they have identified. This leads to an improvement strategy having limited impact and results in pupils not improving quickly enough.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the teaching of the most able pupils, particularly in mathematics, by ensuring that they are readily given harder and more challenging tasks so they are moved on in their learning.
- Improve the teaching of reading and writing so that:
 - key stage 2 pupils can infer, deduce and interrogate texts with confidence
 - teachers provide key stage 2 pupils with the skills to ensure that their spelling, punctuation and grammar are accurate.
- Strengthen leadership and management further by ensuring that all leaders identify and act on weaknesses in a timely fashion, enabling all pupils to achieve their potential.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- The acting headteacher, ably supported by the acting deputy headteacher, has looked after the school extremely well in a time of change. The review of the mission statement and of the teaching of values has united all to a common purpose – the education of the whole child. This is pervasive throughout the school. Its impact is seen clearly as pupils' personal development is outstanding.
- Pupils' understanding of life in modern Britain and of British values is closely aligned with the school's own values. Pupils' interactions with each other and the adults in the school are characterised by mutual respect and tolerance. Provision for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is strong. Pupils have a good understanding of faiths and other cultures. Pupils regularly lead the school in prayer.
- The 'visible learning' project has been a resounding success. The previous full inspection in 2013 recommended that the school help pupils to make decisions about their learning and develop more independence. Now, pupils are using the language of being an independent learner, such as 'I can try things' and 'I can fail without giving up'. Being a 'visible learner', where pupils articulate their learning and the decisions they make, is consistent in all lessons. Pupils say that it has helped them to understand the power of resilience so they 'get there in the end'.
- Decision-making is also strongly promoted by the special educational needs coordinator (SENCo). One parent told inspectors that her child was able to choose which touch-typing class he attended, thus helping him to be independent. The SENCo ensures that planning and provision for pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities is effective. Funds are used wisely. Pupils are supported well by an experienced and skilful team of teaching assistants.
- The additional funding for physical education (PE) and sports and the pupil premium funding are appropriately spent and used to support the needs of pupils effectively. Pupils participate in a wide range of sports and take-up has increased. For example, the village cricket club had two pupils attend prior to the active promotion of cricket. After some effective coaching, it now has well over 50 members. Disadvantaged pupils access the wide range of extra-curricular activities as well as the catch-up sessions.
- The thematic curriculum is rich and engaging. Pupils have the opportunity to visit other places of local interest, such as Jimmy's Farm, to enhance learning and understanding. They also benefit from external speakers and visitors. During the inspection, the school held a samba drumming workshop for all pupils, and this was excitedly received.
- Leaders have a good grasp of the school's strengths and areas for further improvement. They monitor pupils carefully through scrutinising their work, their performance information and through speaking regularly to teachers and pupils. They use this to inform their planning of key actions needed to bring about further developments. However, leaders have not been quick enough to address certain areas of weakness.
- While leaders have been successful with addressing weaknesses in writing so that

progress in this area improves, they did not address readily the decline in reading progress. Leaders identified, during the last academic year, that there were inconsistencies with the teaching of reading skills in key stage 2. They had noted that middle-ability pupils were not making enough progress in reading. However, training for staff on the teaching of reading skills happened the week before this inspection.

- Local authority and diocesan support is 'light touch' because there are no concerns about leaders' abilities to develop the quality of education further. The school works closely with a number of other schools in the local area. They challenge each other and, collaboratively, share good practice.

Governance of the school

- The governing body is highly ambitious for the pupils and makes a strong contribution to the leadership of the school. Governors know the school well. They contribute effectively to the school development plan and monitor its impact closely. They are discerning in their evaluation, taking note of the evidence of impact from a range of sources. They make frequent visits to speak to staff and pupils, scrutinise reports from leaders and cross-reference findings from external consultants.
- Governors effectively hold the school to account, using their expertise and skills to ask challenging questions. They colour code improvement priorities to ascertain what needs further attention or where additional support is needed. This is a useful way of keeping up to date with developments. For example, governors are well aware of how money is spent to support the needs of pupils, including disadvantaged pupils and those who have SEN and/or disabilities. They know that the money is well spent on helping pupils to access the curriculum and to develop a love of learning.
- Governors are diligent in their monitoring of safeguarding. The safeguarding governor provides frequent updates to the governing body so they confidently know that staff are vigilant, appropriate procedures are in place and practice reflects the latest guidance.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Leaders have a sharp focus on safeguarding children. Staff are well trained, knowledgeable and vigilant about safeguarding matters. Staff and pupils know what to do should they have any concern relating to safeguarding matters. There is a strong culture of safeguarding across the school.
- Safeguarding records are of high quality. Safeguarding leaders monitor pupils closely. Strong links with parents and external agencies are evident. All the appropriate safeguarding and welfare requirements are also met in the early years provision. Risk assessments are well understood by staff and pupils, for example with the use of the field adjacent to the school.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- The willingness of staff to embrace new ideas and share good practice ensures that pupils make good progress because of good teaching.
- All teachers use talk as a tool to help pupils plan their writing. Pupils will discuss their ideas first before they start writing. This helps pupils articulate what they wish to write about, as well as ascertaining whether their ideas connect together. As a result, writing quality has improved. Pupils are now writing more fluently and at greater length.
- The focus on drafting, editing and refining work has been well received by pupils and is now standard practice when writing at length. However, pupils are less accurate when they write instantaneously. Correct spelling, punctuation and grammar are not yet embedded for a number of pupils.
- Teachers are also adept at providing steps to success. For example, in a Year 3 mathematics class, a group of girls were busy solving a problem on an A3 sheet of paper. In each box, they had to write what they understood by the problem, draw a visual representation of the problem, calculate it and then write it out. As a result, they worked out the problem successfully. This is common practice across the curriculum where teachers will provide different levels of support and challenge.
- Teachers cultivate pupil independence through giving them a choice of three tasks. They can choose their level of difficulty according to the colour of the task – purple being the hardest. This has motivated pupils as they want to do the purple task. For example, a Year 2 pupil proudly stated that she was working on the purple task. She enthusiastically read to inspectors her two opening sentences for 'The Three Little Pigs', each containing a different time connective.
- Teachers reserve for most-able pupils the black task, which pupils told inspectors was 'really hard'. However, most-able pupils also complained that they were not regularly given the black task and that sometimes other work was too easy. Inspectors noted during the inspection that, in some lessons, most-able pupils were not readily moved on to the next task. When this occurs, the learning slows.
- Teachers use their good subject knowledge to give clear explanations. This helps pupils to quickly settle to their work. Questioning is used well to check understanding. Teaching assistants are also effective at supporting and addressing any misconceptions. They sometimes pre-teach the material, so pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities can experience success, or they will teach material in tandem with the class teacher.
- The teaching of phonics in key stage 1 is strong, as teachers are precise and practise sounds continuously, even when teaching other subjects. Pupils throughout the school enjoy reading and are well supported to develop their reading of difficult texts. Pupils progress through a reading scheme where the vocabulary and concepts become harder. This is monitored closely by teachers so that pupils are reading at least two books at a time.
- Less successful is the teaching of inference and deduction. Where the teaching of reading is strongest, teachers will ask pupils why they have formed particular conclusions. They will ask analytical questions that probe deeply the subtext. Teachers will also invite pupils to make connections within and across texts. The weaker teaching of reading skills focuses mainly on understanding the surface features of the

text, for example who did what and when.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Outstanding

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding.
- Parents are of the view that staff 'go above and beyond' and that they 'really care for the pupils and look out for their welfare'. Inspectors agree. Each pupil is highly valued by staff and this is replicated by the pupils who look after each other.
- The house system and the numerous events held by the school help pupils to socialise across the years. The result is a strong family community whose members enjoy spending time together.
- Pupils work hard as they want to do well. They are confident learners because they are taught how to overcome obstacles and that learning is a process that has its ups and downs. This has a positive effect on their self-esteem. They know how to persevere and are rewarded for doing so.
- Risk-taking behaviours and how to deal with them are key parts of educating the pupils. Staff continually strive to ensure that pupils have an understanding of how to keep themselves safe in all situations. This is even the case with the youngest pupils. For example, during the inspection, one of the youngest pupils went immediately to an adult to say that there was a loose pole on some sports equipment and he was worried that it might hurt another pupil.
- Pupils also have a well-developed understanding of how to stay safe online. They are well informed about different types of bullying, including cyber bullying. Bullying is extremely rare and, when it does occur, it is dealt with well by staff.
- Pupils enjoy learning about health and fitness. Year 6 pupils proudly showed off their vegetable patch and their 'paradise garden' which is a place of sanctuary and rest. Year 2 girls spoke enthusiastically about eating their fruit at breaktimes, but that they also enjoyed their treat of fish and chips on a Friday!

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding. Staff have high expectations of pupils' behaviour. While inappropriate behaviour does occasionally occur at school, staff respond readily. As they know the needs of individuals so well, they understand immediately how to make sure the day goes better for a pupil who may be frustrated or upset. Because of this, the school is friendly and calm.
- Lunchtime behaviour is excellent. Members of the school council are actively involved in drawing up the rules of the playground. They have devised a rota system so that all year groups get to experience the variety of activities on offer, such as using the trim trail of gym equipment. Pupils wait patiently for their turn and encourage each other to try new things. Pupils play happily together.
- Leaders place a high priority on attendance. Pupils enjoy school and want to attend. As

a result, attendance is high for most pupils, including those who have SEN and/or disabilities. Disadvantaged pupils' attendance is not as high as that of their peers. However, leaders use the pupil premium funding to deploy as many strategies as possible to encourage them to attend. For example, through rewards, phone calls and visits home.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Pupils in Year 1 achieve very well in the phonics screening check and apply this in their reading across the curriculum. Pupils make strong progress in key stage 1 and this is borne out by the published data year on year. Attainment in reading, writing and mathematics is consistently well above the national average for the expected standard and for greater depth.
- Pupils in Year 6 also attain above their peers nationally in reading, writing and mathematics. They have done so consistently for several years. However, in 2018, the progress of the most able pupils in mathematics was not as strong as in previous years. Only half of the most able cohort attained the higher standard in mathematics. A scrutiny of current most-able pupils' books shows that, while fluency in mathematics is practised well, pupils are not given enough opportunities to practise reasoning and to apply their skills.
- In 2016, middle-ability pupils' progress in reading was in the top 10% nationally. This dipped in 2017 and has slipped further in 2018. A scrutiny of current pupils' books in key stage 2, and observation of teaching, indicate that senior leaders have correctly identified that pupils' interpretative skills need strengthening.
- Pupils of all ages and abilities read effectively. When they come across unfamiliar words, pupils use their secure knowledge of letter sounds to help them. They persevere when the text is challenging. Pupils read regularly, both at home and in school. They enjoy reading and some pupils aspire to become authors. This is because of the high-quality texts pupils read and the opportunities they have to listen to stories.
- Most disadvantaged pupils make good progress in reading, writing and mathematics. The effective use of pupil premium funding ensures that even those whose attendance is irregular achieve well. This is because they have immediate booster sessions to ensure that key learning is not missed.
- Pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities are supported well and make good progress from lower starting points. Staff quickly identify their needs. Skilled teaching assistants then support them well, but at the same time, promoting their independence by not giving more help than they need.
- Work in pupils' books shows that pupils typically make good progress in a range of subjects other than literacy and numeracy, including science, art, history and geography. Science work scrutinised by inspectors showed that older pupils are well prepared for undertaking scientific investigations when they join Year 7. Advanced scientific work was evident for the three sciences, biology, chemistry and physics. Pupils' artwork is equally as impressive and they regularly take inspiration from artists and their work.

Early years provision

Outstanding

- Leadership of the early years provision is very strong. Teachers have a clear view about the strengths and how to improve provision and children’s learning successfully. These improvements are based on a thorough understanding of children’s development, as well as flexibility to adapt to the individual needs of children.
- The way that teachers assess children is of high quality. Information is gathered constantly and used effectively to plan a curriculum that is both interesting and relevant. As a result, adults know and respond to the individual learning needs of children to great effect, including the most able and children that are disadvantaged.
- The proportion of children who reach a good level of development by the end of Reception is well above the national figure. This has been the case for several years. A larger proportion than that seen nationally also achieve the higher standards.
- Throughout the two classes, provision is highly consistent. It is skilfully organised and routines are established very quickly. Teachers create a rich and varied learning environment for all children, both inside and outdoors. As a result, children are excited about their learning and confident in their abilities. Activities are fun and are led regularly by the interests of the children. Activities capture their imagination and allow them to practise their skills. For example, Fred the Ted was sat watching over the children’s picnic activity and would only eat the food offered to him if the child could sound-talk to him as he ate, such as saying ‘p for pear’.
- The quality of teaching is outstanding. Adults demonstrate excellent knowledge about young children’s learning and are highly skilled at asking questions to draw out children’s understanding. This extends them to think more deeply about their learning. The importance placed on fostering reading, writing, speaking and listening and mathematical skills is very evident, with regular chances for children to write, practise their letters and sounds, and use numbers in all that they do.
- Teachers skilfully weave learning into fun play. For example, children undertook a car wash activity where they had to number their cars before washing. They were encouraged to choose large numbers and then were asked to create sums totalling the number before their car could be washed. Another example seen was children racing cars down number lines to estimate how far the cars would get.
- The environment is stimulating and exciting. It is carefully designed to promote development in all areas of the curriculum and is accessible for all children. Since the previous full inspection, leaders have placed a high priority on the development of the outdoor provision and purposeful play. Adults use the outdoor area well. Children have access to a range of activities and are able to select equipment for themselves.
- Safeguarding is effective. Risk assessments are appropriate and the classrooms provide a safe environment, inside and out, while still allowing children to try out new experiences and take appropriate risks.
- The strong emphasis on creating a caring and nurturing environment is evident from the very positive relationships that adults have with children. Children play and learn together extremely well.

School details

Unique reference number	115083
Local authority	Essex
Inspection number	10054375

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	5 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	414
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Faith Spinlove
Headteacher	Rick Cranfield
Telephone number	01206 240288
Website	www.heathlands.essex.sch.uk
Email address	admin@heathlands.essex.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	20 March 2018

Information about this school

- Heathlands Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School is larger than most primary schools.
- The previous headteacher left the school at short notice in May 2018. Since then, the deputy headteacher has been acting headteacher and the SENCo has been acting deputy headteacher. Some middle leaders have also taken on elements of senior leadership, for example the key stage 2 leader is now the deputy safeguarding leader. Governors have advertised the headship post and are interviewing soon.
- An inspection of the religious education (section 48) at the school took place on 7 July 2014.
- The proportion of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities is lower than the national average. The proportion of pupils who have an education, health and care plan is in line with the national average.

- The proportion of pupils who are disadvantaged and in receipt of pupil premium funding is below the national average.
- The school is in a consortium of 12 schools that share practice. The school works particularly closely with North Primary School and Bishop William Ward School.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed lessons across a range of subjects in the early years, key stage 1 and key stage 2. Some observations were carried out jointly with senior leaders.
- During visits to lessons, inspectors spoke with pupils and looked at their work to find out more about how well they are learning.
- The lead inspector met with governors, including the chair of the governing body.
- The lead inspector discussed the school's effectiveness with representatives from the local authority and the diocese.
- Discussions were also held with the acting headteacher, acting deputy headteacher, phase leaders (called department leaders), subject leaders, the SENCo, the sports premium coordinator, the early years leader, staff with responsibility for safeguarding, teaching assistants and newer members of staff.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour in lessons and around the school. Inspectors met formally with three groups of pupils and spoke informally to pupils on the playground.
- Inspectors read with nine pupils from a range of year groups (Year 2 through to Year 6).
- Inspectors scrutinised a range of documentation. This included policies, leaders' evaluation of the school's effectiveness, the school's improvement plans, safeguarding records and information about pupils' attendance, attainment and progress.
- Inspectors considered the 54 responses to Ofsted's online staff survey and the 235 responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View. Inspectors also spoke to parents when they dropped their children off at school at the start of the day.

Inspection team

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