

Edwinstree Church of England Middle School

Norfolk Road, Buntingford, Hertfordshire SG9 9AW

Inspection dates

17–18 October 2018

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- Since the last inspection, the strong leadership of the new headteacher and her restructured senior team has brought about rapid improvement.
- Parents, pupils and staff are overwhelmingly supportive of the school's leadership.
- The governing body is effective in supporting and challenging school leaders.
- School leaders are committed to maintaining a consistently high quality of education across a rich and relevant curriculum. As a result, pupils make good progress in a wide range of subjects.
- Pupils' writing is strong because there are well-planned opportunities for pupils to practise what they learn in English in other subjects.
- The school's work to ensure that disadvantaged pupils make strong progress is having a positive impact.
- Pupils' behaviour is good. They have responded well to the school's positive ethos, which effectively uses Christian values to shape a caring and inclusive school.
- The overall quality of teaching is good, and the school's focus on developing teachers' skills ensures that teaching is improving.
- Outcomes are improving across the school, but they are not yet good because the most able pupils in mathematics and the most able disadvantaged pupils do not make the progress they should.
- Where outcomes are not good it is because currently strong teaching has not had time to fully compensate for previous weaknesses.
- Teachers do not routinely provide sufficient challenge for the most able pupils in lessons.
- There are too few opportunities for pupils to practise the skills they learn in mathematics in other subjects.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Strengthen teaching, learning and assessment in the school by ensuring that:
 - teachers plan sufficient challenge in their lessons for the most able pupils
 - teachers incorporate opportunities for pupils to practise their numeracy skills in a range of subjects outside mathematics.
- Improve outcomes, so that they are at least good in all subjects and for all pupil groups, by strengthening the progress made by:
 - the most able pupils in mathematics
 - the most able disadvantaged pupils.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- The determined leadership of the headteacher and other senior leaders has ensured that this is a rapidly improving school.
- The strength of leadership is recognised overwhelmingly by parents, pupils and staff. The headteacher took up her post after the previous inspection. She has quickly won the support of all members of the school community for her vision for the school.
- Christian values lie at the heart of everything the school does. These are clearly articulated throughout the school. They embody high expectations about how all members of the school community conduct themselves and treat each other. These high expectations result in the pupils' positive behaviour and constructive attitudes to their learning.
- This is a highly inclusive school, where there are high expectations of what all pupils can achieve regardless of their background, race, religion or sexuality. The tolerance and respect that pupils develop for diversity is clear on a daily basis in how they interact with their peers and adults throughout the school.
- Leaders have a clear understanding of what the school does well and what needs to be a priority for further improvement. This knowledge informs thorough development planning, which is focused on improving outcomes for those pupils who may not be making the progress they should.
- The school's professional development programme is carefully planned to help improve the skills of individual teachers. Performance management systems are used effectively to identify individual targets and training is tailored to help meet the school's priorities and individual needs. As a result, the quality of teaching is improving and teaching is effective in a wide range of subjects.
- Teachers in charge of curriculum areas and pastoral teams are effective. They are well supported by senior leaders and they appreciate the clear systems that support and guide their work. They are becoming more confident in planning strategically in their own areas.
- School leaders use the pupil premium funding to reduce the overall difference between the performance of disadvantaged pupils and other pupils nationally. They have a clear understanding of where they need to be even more effective. They use additional funding to strengthen the progress of pupils who need to catch up with their peers when they first arrive, and to promote pupils' progress in physical education and sport.
- Staff and governors have a passionate commitment to a rich and relevant curriculum, which covers the humanities and linguistic, mathematical, scientific, technical, social, physical and artistic learning. They plan how this can be best implemented, including teaching lessons at other partner schools. Leaders regularly evaluate how the curriculum is supporting better teaching and learning.
- School leaders ensure that all teachers in charge of subjects plan for coherent progression across all four years that pupils attend the school, even though this covers the final two years of key stage 2 and the first two years of key stage 3. In some

subjects, systems for monitoring pupils' progress over time lack the precision to achieve this across both key stages.

- The school ensures a smooth transition for pupils, both when they join in Year 5 and when they move on to their next school at the end of Year 8. Liaison with partner first schools and the local upper school is well developed. Careers education is delivered appropriately to Year 8 pupils so they can start to relate their learning in school to opportunities in the wider world.
- The school develops pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding through subject lessons, personal development lessons, daily collective worship, 'fullness days' and tutorial periods. As a result, pupils are well prepared for life in modern Britain. There is a wide range of extra-curricular activities, which are well attended and help enhance pupils' learning and positive attitudes.

Governance of the school

- Governance has been strengthened over the last two years. A number of new governors have brought necessary expertise to the governing body. As a result, governors are now providing a clear strategic direction for the development of the school, which is underpinning current improvements.
- Governors now have a much clearer understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of teaching in the school. They ensure that performance management rewards good teaching and challenges underperformance. Governors have sharpened their focus on holding leaders to account for the use of the additional funding available to the school.
- Governors undertake their range of responsibilities diligently. They fulfil all their duties, such as ensuring that safeguarding procedures are rigorous.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Leaders, including governors, have helped create a transparent culture of safeguarding. Leaders regularly evaluate all dimensions of safety and safeguarding so they can make continuous improvements. The school ensures a thorough approach to safer recruitment, maintaining central records and risk assessments.
- All staff are clear about the procedures they need to follow if they have the smallest concern, and all concerns are followed up methodically and in a timely fashion. Staff liaise effectively with external agencies so that pupils get the help that they need rapidly. Information is shared with parents and carers on these occasions, and collaborative working with other agencies helps keep children safe. The school coordinates the care and welfare of children looked after who attend the school.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Effective teaching has a positive impact on learning and pupils make strong progress in a wide range of subjects as a result.
- There is a purposeful and productive atmosphere in almost all lessons. Teachers create

very constructive, trusting relationships. Pupils listen attentively to teachers' explanations and follow instructions carefully, asking for help when they need it.

- Teachers plan lessons thoroughly. They use the detailed information which is made available to them about pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities to ensure that work is accessible to them. Teachers liaise with teaching assistants to help them get the right balance between providing necessary individual support and fostering pupils' independence.
- Teachers ensure that pupils, particularly those who have lower starting points, do not get left behind. They are persistent during explanations to consolidate prior learning.
- Teachers usually have high expectations of what all pupils can achieve in lessons. The strongest teaching over time routinely incorporates tasks which stretch the most able pupils from the outset of every lesson.
- However, on occasion, teachers only plan to provide this extra level of challenge for the most able through short additional extension tasks. Sometimes these are not challenging, and even if they are, often pupils can choose whether they attempt them or not. This slows the learning of some most-able pupils.
- In most lessons, pupils take great pride in producing work because teachers have high expectations of presentation. As a result, most pupils write coherently to support future revision.
- Pupils read widely and talk enthusiastically about the books they are currently reading for pleasure. The two school libraries are well used. Pupils regularly read extended texts and practise a range of written styles in subjects other than English.
- The development of numeracy across the curriculum is not sufficiently developed, so pupils do not get the opportunity to apply what they have learned in mathematics in other subjects.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- School leaders have adopted a range of strategies to promote positive personal development and welfare. Clear messages are conveyed through collective worship, a planned tutorial programme and weekly personal development lessons. All pupils are encouraged to develop their leadership skills and Year 8 pupils apply for formal leadership positions. Pupils take a role in planning 'fullness days', which address issues of concern identified by the pupils themselves.
- Parents and pupils rightly say pupils feel safe and are well looked after. They are supervised at break and lunchtimes and are confident that staff will help them should they experience any problems, for example by seeking help in the dedicated 'learning zone'. The curriculum helps pupils manage other risks, such as the use of the internet and social networking sites.
- The school develops the physical and emotional well-being of pupils through a range of subjects across the curriculum including physical education, religious education and

food technology. A large number of pupils benefit from the range of extra-curricular activities available, including sport, music and the arts.

- On the rare occasions that pupils are taught through off-site provision, the school monitors their personal development, behaviour and welfare, so they can be integrated on their return.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Behaviour has improved markedly since the previous inspection. The school's overarching ethos of care and consideration for others encourages positive behaviour. Teachers apply the school's behaviour policy consistently when they need to. Misbehaviour in lessons rarely impedes learning.
- Pupils look after the school site as well as they look after each other. They are almost always polite to adults and other pupils. Pupils move around the school in an orderly fashion.
- Pupils say that they enjoy school; as a result, they attend well and arrive punctually to lessons. Attendance and persistent absence are both in line with the national average.
- Records show that the number of behaviour-related sanctions is small. The school has dealt with the very small number of bullying incidents that have occurred. Pupils and parents say they have confidence in the systems to deter, and respond to, bullying.
- Pupils demonstrate overwhelmingly positive attitudes to their learning. They work hard and want to achieve well. On occasion, when they are given the choice, they opt for work they are already comfortable with, rather than select tasks that might stretch them and strengthen their progress.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- School leaders monitor the progress pupils make from their starting points. This gives them an accurate picture of the relative strengths and weaknesses in the performance of different pupil groups across all subjects.
- The progress that the most able pupils make in mathematics is not yet good. This is because, although the teaching they receive is good, they are held back by gaps in their knowledge from previously weak teaching.
- The progress made by disadvantaged pupils is improving rapidly. However, the progress made by the most able disadvantaged pupils is not as strong as it is for disadvantaged pupils from other starting points.
- In English, pupils make the progress they should and this progress is particularly strong in writing. This is because skilful teaching is well supported by the school's focus on literacy across the curriculum.
- Pupils make similarly strong progress in both key stages. Since the last inspection, the progress achieved by pupils overall in a wide range of subjects has strengthened. Pupils make strong progress in science, the humanities, the arts, modern foreign languages, technology and physical education. As a result, they attain standards which are above average in most subjects by the time they leave.

- The skills pupils develop equip them for the next stage of their education. Particularly effective liaison between the school and the local upper school ensures that pupils are very well prepared for this transition.
- Pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities are well supported. The progress of these pupils currently in the school is strengthening because teachers meet their needs effectively, including through the use of teaching assistants.
- The pupils who need to catch up in English and mathematics in Year 7 benefit greatly from a structured programme, which is supported by the additional funding the school receives. This ensures that the difference between their attainment and expectations for their age has diminished by the end of Year 7. Inspectors heard pupils who had completed their accelerated literacy programme read with confidence and fluency.

School details

Unique reference number	117554
Local authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	10044758

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

Type of school	Middle deemed secondary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	9 to 13
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	427
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	John Boulter
Headteacher	Joanne Gant
Telephone number	01763 271 446
Website	www.edwinstree.herts.sch.uk
Email address	head@edwinstree.herts.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	15–16 March 2016

Information about this school

- The school is a voluntary-controlled Church of England school. The last section 48 inspection was in June 2017.
- The school is smaller than the average-sized secondary school.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils for whom the school receives pupil premium funding is below the national average.
- Most pupils are White British. The proportion of minority ethnic pupils and pupils who speak English as an additional language is below average.
- The proportion of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities is in line with the national average.
- A small number of pupils are currently taught off-site at Rivers Education Support Centre, Hertford.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed pupils' learning in 41 lessons, in order to contribute to their evaluation of the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. Some of these observations were conducted jointly with members of the school's leadership team. Inspectors also observed tutorial periods and collective worship.
- Inspectors held meetings with the headteacher, senior and middle leaders, teachers, members of the governing body and groups of pupils. An inspector undertook a telephone conversation with a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors scrutinised a range of school documentation including policies, the school's self-evaluation, the school's improvement plan and information about pupils' achievement, behaviour and attendance.
- Inspectors considered the views expressed in 170 responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, including 57 free-text responses from parents, and 31 questionnaires returned by school staff.

Inspection team

Paul Lawrence, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Karen Kerridge	Ofsted Inspector
Jenny Carpenter	Ofsted Inspector

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