

Christ the Sower Ecumenical Primary School (VA)

Singleton Drive, Grange Farm, Milton Keynes, Buckinghamshire, MK8 0PZ

Inspection dates

11–12 December 2018

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an inadequate school

- Standards are too low. Pupils, including the most able, are underachieving across much of the curriculum. Too few pupils reach their full potential.
- The teaching of mathematics and writing is poor. Many pupils do not have the basic skills they need to achieve success. Pupils' presentation skills are underdeveloped.
- Standards of achievement for disadvantaged pupils and pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are too low. Support and additional funding has not been targeted to where it is needed most.
- Middle leadership is ineffective. Subject leaders, including those with responsibility for the early years, do not retain sufficient oversight of how well pupils are learning.
- Teachers' expectations are too low. Planned activities do not cater sufficiently well for pupils with different starting points or abilities. Teachers' professional skills and expertise are underdeveloped.
- Senior leadership is temporary and a shared arrangement. Interim leaders have only been in post a short time. Consequently, leadership capacity to improve the school is too fragile.
- Governance is ineffective. Governors have not challenged senior leaders robustly enough about the school's performance.
- Many parents and carers would not recommend the school. Parents who responded to Parent View are concerned about the progress their children are making and the quality of leadership and management.

The school has the following strengths

- The interim leadership team has a very accurate view of the school's strengths and weaknesses. They are ambitious, experienced and keen to see the school improve.
- Pupils are well mannered. Many show high levels of respect towards adults and try their best.
- Pupils read widely and often. Many say they enjoy reading for pleasure. In this subject, pupils achieve well, including in the early years.
- Safeguarding is effective. Temporary leaders have ensured that the school's systems and processes are fit for purpose.

Full report

In accordance with section 44(1) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires special measures because it is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the persons responsible for leading, managing or governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Strengthen the quality of leadership and management, including in the early years, and governance, by making sure that:
 - a sustainable leadership and governance structure is established
 - middle leaders develop the skills and expertise needed to oversee their subjects or departments effectively
 - teaching and support staff receive sufficient training to carry out their roles effectively
 - the curriculum meets the needs of all pupils more precisely
 - staff performance management is regularly monitored and reviewed so that staff are held more firmly to account
 - the school's finances are kept under watchful review and evaluated for value for money
 - the school's website meets requirements.
- Improve the quality of teaching and learning to accelerate pupils' progress by ensuring that:
 - disadvantaged pupils and pupils with SEND are helped to catch up and achieve well
 - pupils receive their entitlement to a broad and balanced curriculum
 - teachers have higher expectations of what pupils of different capabilities can achieve, particularly in reading, writing, mathematics and science
 - teachers' subject knowledge improves so that explanations are modelled clearly and usefully to pupils
 - activities in lessons cater well for pupils of all abilities and are pitched to take account of pupils' needs, including those of the most able
 - teaching assistants develop their skills and expertise to have a positive impact on pupils' learning
 - pupils' presentation and pride in their work improves.

An external review of governance should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

An external review of the school's use of the pupil premium should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Inadequate

- Standards have declined significantly since the previous inspection. Too few pupils are achieving the standards they are capable of across a broad range of subjects. Over time, leaders have not managed the performance of staff effectively. As a result, the quality of teaching is weak. Leaders have neither maintained the standard seen at the previous inspection nor instigated further improvement with the required level of intent.
- New leaders have communicated plainly and with strong conviction to ensure that governors, staff and parents are clear on what needs to improve. Both the interim executive headteacher and the interim head of school have made some headway by establishing basic systems to improve the school. Nevertheless, interim leaders' well-judged actions have not had time to trigger a positive effect, including the improvement of pupils' progress. Leadership arrangements are not yet sustainable to build capacity and capitalise upon these initial positive steps.
- Local authority representatives rightly identified concerns about the school's effectiveness in April 2018. Wisely, local authority officers have recently intensified their support, initiating the formation of a 'targeted improvement board'. Since June 2018, the board has met regularly. However, responsible stakeholders know that too little has been achieved to arrest the decline, particularly regarding improving the quality of governance, establishing long-term leadership arrangements and improving pupils' outcomes.
- Since the departure of the previous headteacher and following a local authority review of school effectiveness in May 2018, the school has faced a difficult and challenging time. Although the new interim leadership arrangements have instigated some sensible changes, leaders have yet to win the full confidence both of some parents and staff. Parents are concerned about a whole host of issues, including a perception that the school is losing its community feel. They agree that standards need to rise and are concerned about the pace of change. Many parents are clear that there are many worrying issues and that this is an uncertain time.
- Over time, the leadership of special educational needs has been particularly weak. Leaders have neither monitored nor evaluated this aspect sufficiently well. As a result, weaknesses in teaching that have a direct impact on the progress of pupils with SEND have remained unchallenged. The interim leadership team is now wisely drawing on expertise from one of their other schools to fill this gap in the school's provision. A capable special educational needs coordinator (SENCo) has begun to review and overhaul this aspect. This work is at an early stage.
- Other leaders, including phase leaders, are very new to their roles. Longer-serving middle leaders, including those who hold responsibility for English and mathematics, do not hold sufficient leadership skill or capacity to tackle deficiencies in teaching or to raise outcomes in their subjects. Middle leaders are wholly dependent on interim senior leaders to set a strategic direction for the development of their subjects.
- Owing to significant change, alongside a backdrop of the staff's growing realisation of

the school's weaknesses, staff morale is very low. Adults are apprehensive about the extent of improvement required and the uncertainty associated with temporary leadership arrangements. Some are feeling derailed by the extent of change required.

- Pupil premium funding is not used well enough to help disadvantaged pupils catch up with their peers. The school's own evaluation shows that strategies in recent years have not accelerated pupils' progress sufficiently well. The current leadership team evaluates this aspect as inadequate.
- Pupils' books show limited coverage of some subjects, like science, history and geography. Standards in many subjects are too low, and some pupils do not access a broad and balanced curriculum.
- Parents are worried about the standard of education on offer. Some parents are concerned about their children's progress over time. Approximately 40% of those who responded to Parent View would not recommend the school.
- The school should not appoint newly qualified teachers.

Governance of the school

- Governors do not fulfil their statutory duties, such as regularly reviewing school policies and procedures, effectively. Required policies, such as the school's complaints procedure, are not kept under watchful review.
- Governors have not monitored or challenged school performance closely enough. Consequently, governors' understanding of performance information is very limited. Despite this, governors have declined the local authority's offer of training in this regard. Governors are not working closely or productively enough with the interim leadership team.
- The use of additional funding, such as that intended for special educational needs and pupil premium, is not monitored closely enough. Governors have not reviewed spending from previous years and are not aware of how the school intends to spend this year's allocation. Pupils with SEND, and disadvantaged pupils, underachieve, as monies are not directed to where they are needed most.
- Parents express dissatisfaction with the governing body's level of communication, particularly when a concern is raised. Parents do not feel included or served well. One governor, who wants to see the school succeed, candidly shouldered some responsibility on behalf of others, saying, 'We haven't done as much as we could.'
- Parents are deeply concerned about the upheaval experienced in recent months. Governors have done too little to reassure parents. One parent noted: 'There seems to be a lot of uncertainty about which way the school is headed. Governors have not communicated what is happening.'

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- In October 2018, interim leaders commissioned a helpful audit of the school's safeguarding procedures. This highlighted many key weaknesses in the school's

systems, processes and approach. Leaders reacted quickly and thoroughly to improve this aspect and make sure pupils are kept safe. Concerns about pupils are now logged more carefully and followed up in a timelier manner. Leaders have also ensured that all staff are now checked at the required level to make sure that they are safe to work with children.

- Staff have now received the required level of training and know how to report concerns. Leaders have revised the school's policy in line with the latest guidance. Governors have yet to ratify this policy and ensure that it is shared with all staff. Nonetheless, staff are fully up to speed with the requirements of the latest government guidance.
- Interim leaders have displayed a single-minded insistence that previous shortcomings in the school's safeguarding procedures are fully and thoroughly addressed. Inspectors are satisfied that because of leaders' robust response, pupils are now kept safe.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Inadequate

- Teachers' expectations are too low. Staff have not received sufficient training to develop their skills and expertise. Some staff are under-equipped and do not have secure skills or approaches at their fingertips. Although pupils participate tolerably in activities, too few make real gains in developing their knowledge and understanding over time.
- Teachers do not use assessment information well enough to plan tasks to move pupils' learning forward when they are ready. Learning activities are not adjusted or modified when required. As a result, the learning needs of many pupils, including those with SEND, disadvantaged pupils, and the most able pupils, are not well catered for and their progress slows.
- Pupils told inspectors that sometimes work is too tricky because teachers do not always explain what is expected very well. Teachers' explanations and demonstrations of what is required in learning activities are too weak. Although pupils routinely give of their best, pupils' uncertainty and misunderstandings control too much of their learning experience. Pupils' learning is impeded when they are not clear about what to do or how to be successful.
- Pupils have not gained secure basic skills over time. Pupils' proficiency with number skills, such as when calculating change to solve money problems, is underdeveloped. For example, in a Year 2 mathematics session, although pupils could use a number line to work out difference, many struggled to recombine the tens and units to find the solution.
- Teachers do not know or understand pupils' capacity to learn well enough. For many pupils, including the most able and those with SEND, tasks are not pitched at the right level. For some this means that they simply repeat things they already know. For other pupils, tasks are inaccessible and beyond pupils' reach.
- Many parents commented that they do not receive information about how well their children are progressing. A significant proportion of parents, including those of children with SEND, are dissatisfied with the progress their children are making.

- The school's SENCo, although very new to post, is beginning to methodically address significant weaknesses. It is widely acknowledged that pupils with SEND are underachieving, and over time the provision for this group has been inadequate. Nevertheless, the SENCo is taking positive steps to address these inadequacies. For instance, pupils, particularly those with an education, health and care plan, are now receiving better and more specialised support for the first time.
- Recently, interim leaders have reviewed the role of support staff, and teaching assistants are now a little clearer on what is expected. However, staff's skills and expertise are underdeveloped, and teaching assistants are not yet effective at supporting pupils' learning.
- There are pockets where the quality of teaching and learning is more promising. For instance, at times teachers use well-considered questioning to extend pupils' thinking more effectively. Equally, in some subjects, such as reading, art and physical education, pupils achieve better outcomes than elsewhere in the curriculum.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Requires improvement

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare requires improvement.
- Pupils say they enjoy learning. However, many do not know how to improve their skills and which things they need to practise. Consequently, pupils' approaches to new challenges and tasks lack commitment and the tangible, focused resolve to do well.
- Pupils try hard to incorporate a range of grammatical conventions and literary devices into their writing. However, pupils lack enthusiasm for writing for pleasure. Although pupils undertake tasks methodically, their creative thinking and deeper immersion in activities such as storytelling is not evident.
- Teachers' expectations are too low. Consequently, many pupils do not show high levels of care or pride in their written work. When they do attempt to give of their best, pupils' capabilities are not exploited well enough.
- Pupils are thoughtful, articulate and reflective. They have a well-rounded understanding of the school's values and the concepts that underpin modern British values. They engage readily in conversation, participating maturely and reflectively.
- The interim leadership team is highly committed to ensuring that pupils are safe, learning well and happy in school. In the first few weeks of their tenure they have rightly prioritised improving pupils' well-being. However, some parents are concerned that the school's community feel is becoming depressed due to the rapid rate of change.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement.
- Pupils hold mixed views about behaviour both in and out of class. Some say that

lessons are disrupted by low-level disturbances, and inspectors concur with that view. However, when off-task behaviour bubbles, this is generally because pupils are unclear about what to do.

- Pupils have a reasonable understanding of what constitutes bullying. They say that adults take it seriously and deal with it effectively. With respect to less serious incidents, pupils say that adults' responses are sometimes insufficient. They worry that their more minor concerns are not always taken so seriously. As a result, pupils say that sometimes issues persist.
- Interim leaders have recently revised the school's approach to managing pupils' behaviour. Some adults are not clear, particularly, about leaders' approach to sanctions and consequences. Leaders are now logging incidents more clearly, but it is too soon for those responsible to begin to analyse trends and patterns. This aspect was not monitored closely enough in the past.
- Pupils attend school regularly. The interim leadership team is ambitious for this to improve and has raised expectations of pupils' attendance even higher. Pupils' attendance is in line with that seen nationally.
- Pupils feel safe in school. They have a sound grasp of how to keep themselves safe, including when online. Pupils told inspectors that they feel safe because 'adults look after us'.
- Adults are vigilant when supervising pupils, including in the early years. Predominantly, adults are quick to intervene if pupils require assistance or become unsettled during social times.

Outcomes for pupils

Inadequate

- Pupils' achievement in writing and mathematics is too low. Too few pupils make real gains in their learning, particularly during their journey across key stage 2. As a result, too few pupils achieve the standards they are capable of.
- Pupils' basic skills are underdeveloped. For instance, many pupils do not have the basic calculation skills expected for their age. Pupils struggle to apply their skills to solve complex calculations, as their understanding of mathematical concepts is not always secure. In part, this is because planned activities are not sequenced well to support pupils in consolidating their skills and understanding.
- Pupils with SEND are not catered for well enough and consequently are underachieving. Adults do not always adapt tasks appropriately or plan activities that build on pupils' prior learning.
- The most able pupils do not achieve the standards they are capable of in reading, writing or mathematics. Parents are concerned that the most able pupils are not stretched sufficiently. One noted, 'Higher achievers are not challenged enough.'
- Pupils' spelling, writing and handwriting skills have not improved rapidly enough since the previous inspection. Many pupils say that improving their handwriting skills is at the top of their list.
- Pupils underachieve across the wider curriculum. Pupils do not receive their full

entitlement to a wide range of subjects, including in science. Standards are too low, and pupils' misconceptions, particularly in science, go unchallenged. Pupils are not developing secure knowledge and understanding in this aspect.

- Too few disadvantaged pupils achieve the standard expected for their age in reading, writing or mathematics. Additional funding is not sharply pinpointed to meet their needs well.
- Standards in the Year 1 phonics (letters and the sounds they represent) screening check in 2018 are in line with those seen nationally. Teachers model sounds effectively, and pupils can segment and blend words with a degree of accuracy. Pupils enjoy reading and visiting the school's library.
- Children make steady progress across the early years. The proportion who met a good level of development at the end of their Reception Year in 2018 was in line with that seen nationally.

Early years provision

Requires improvement

- The leadership of early years requires improvement. Plans to improve this aspect of the school lack precision. Senior leaders are yet to ascertain an accurate picture of the quality of provision in the early years. This impedes the quality of the leader's understanding of strengths and weaknesses.
- Parents' involvement in their children's learning is highly variable. Communication books are used well for some children but not all. As a result, liaison between home and school for some families is not as strong as intended. Parents noted that they are not always kept well informed about their children's progress.
- The quality of assessment in the early years is inconsistent. Records of children's achievement are variable in quality. In weaker examples, adults do not always identify children's next steps with sufficient precision. Leaders are yet to assure themselves that this year's baseline assessment information is accurate.
- Many children start school with skills and understanding that are below those typical for their age, particularly in communication, language and literacy. Most children make at least typical progress in their learning. In 2018, the proportion of children ready for Year 1 was in line with that seen nationally. Nevertheless, too few of the most able children make sufficient progress to exceed the early learning goals and achieve highly.
- Adults engage well with children in a full range of learning activities. Adults model language well and are highly sensitive towards children's responses. They are quick to clarify key vocabulary when necessary to ensure that children's understanding is consolidated and develops well. However, support for children, including those of lower ability, particularly within the early stages of writing, is sometimes less successful.
- Phonics is taught effectively. Adults demonstrate a clear understanding of the teaching of early reading skills, modelling letters and sounds accurately. Children make good progress in acquiring the skills needed for success in early reading. Adults model language very effectively and this contributes well to the progress children make.
- Adults have high expectations of children's conduct. For example, in a library session,

adults took time to ensure that children knew how to line up efficiently and in an orderly manner before returning to the classroom. Adults have high expectations of children's behaviour. Children try hard to meet what is expected of them.

- Children are well cared for, and safeguarding procedures meet requirements. For instance, adults make regular checks, such as when ensuring that play equipment is safe to use. Warm relationships between adults and children are highly evident. Children respond well to adults' expectations: routines are embedded and followed well.

School details

Unique reference number	134164
Local authority	Milton Keynes
Inspection number	10084355

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	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	396
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Vacancy
Interim Executive Headteacher	Ms Jo Alikhan
Telephone number	01908 867356
Website	www.ctsmk.org.uk
Email address	school@ctsmk.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	5–6 February 2014

Information about this school

- Since the previous inspection there have been significant changes to the school's leadership arrangements. The previous headteacher left in July 2018. The local authority has brokered leadership support. In September 2018, an executive headteacher from two local federated schools took up the role of executive headteacher. At the same time, the deputy headteacher of Drayton Park School took up post as head of school on a temporary basis.
- Prior to half term, the executive headteacher worked one day per week in the school. Since October 2018, the level of leadership support from new interim leaders has increased. The executive headteacher and the head of school now work five days per week, alternating from week to week with one another. This arrangement is temporary, although it is unclear for how long.
- The school's deputy headteacher, who took up post in January 2018, is absent.

Approximately 50% of staff have joined since the previous inspection.

- The school's SENCo is seconded to offer support from Drayton Park School. This arrangement was agreed in September 2018.
- A review of governance has been commissioned by the local authority, which will take place in December 2018. The chair of the governing body resigned on day one of the inspection.
- The school does not meet requirements on the publication of information because some of the necessary information about the school's spending of pupil premium and sports funding, the latest performance information for 2018, and equalities objectives are missing from its website.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors met with the acting executive headteacher, the acting head of school, and other leaders who hold significant responsibilities.
- The lead inspector met with a representative from the local authority, who acts as the school's improvement adviser. Some telephone conversations were also conducted, including with a parent governor and the diocesan education officer.
- The inspection team visited a variety of lessons in different year groups and subjects, many accompanied by either the executive headteacher or the head of school and reviewed some work in pupils' books.
- Inspectors discussed pupils' progress and attainment with leaders.
- Inspectors listened to some pupils in Year 2, Year 4 and Year 6 read, and discussed their choice of reading material.
- Inspectors spoke to pupils informally and met with pupils from Year 2 to Year 6.
- Parents' views were considered through the 53 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, including 32 free-text comments.
- Inspectors took account of 38 survey responses submitted by staff and 53 responses of pupils to the pupil survey.
- Inspectors scrutinised records and documentation relating to safeguarding, behaviour, attendance, pupils' achievement and school improvement planning.
- Inspectors reviewed the checks made on staff about their suitability to work with children.

Inspection team

Elizabeth Farr, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Deborah Gordon	Ofsted Inspector
Hilary Goddard	Ofsted Inspector
Clive Dunn	Her Majesty's Inspector

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In the report, 'disadvantaged pupils' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route. www.gov.uk/pupil-premium-information-for-schools-and-alternative-provision-settings.

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