

St Peter's Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School, Sible Hedingham

School Road, Sible Hedingham, Halstead, Essex CO9 3NR

Inspection dates

16–17 January 2019

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	Good
Early years provision	Requires improvement
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- School leaders have taken effective action to ensure that pupils make good overall progress in reading and writing and mathematics across all year groups.
- Leaders and governors demonstrate a good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses and know what to do to improve outcomes for pupils further.
- Disadvantaged pupils are supported well to make good, and sometimes better, progress in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Leaders use funding well to ensure that pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) make strong progress from their different starting points.
- Teachers demonstrate good subject knowledge in reading, writing and mathematics. They plan lessons that spark pupils' interest and inspire them to do well.
- Leaders provide a safe environment for pupils to learn and play. Pupils, parents and carers, and school staff say pupils are safe. All systems for safeguarding are effective.
- The school is a vibrant, happy place. The school's exciting curriculum and strong values develop pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well.
- Pupils behave well in and out of lessons. They love learning and are polite and respectful to each other and adults.
- All staff are very positive about the leadership of the school. They are happy to be members of the school community and they feel they are well supported by leaders.
- Leaders' plans for improvement are not focused well enough on improving the outcomes of pupils across all subject areas.
- Teachers do not always use information about pupils' progress well enough to plan activities that support pupils, particularly those with average prior attainment, to make the good and better progress of which they are capable.
- Significant staffing changes in the early years have meant that provision does not consistently meet the needs of all children. As a result, children, particularly the most able, do not make the good progress they should.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Strengthen leadership and management by ensuring that information about pupils' progress is linked more closely to improvement plans.
- Improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment by:
 - ensuring that teachers sharpen their use of assessment information to plan learning that supports pupils, especially those with middle prior attainment, to make stronger progress in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment in the early years by ensuring that:
 - decisive action is taken to strengthen leadership in the early years
 - adults use information about what children already know and can do to plan tasks that immediately meet their needs, particularly of the most able children
 - all adults have higher expectations of what children are capable of.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- Since taking up post in September 2015, the headteacher, ably supported by her senior leaders, has made sure that the quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good. The headteacher has worked with external advisers to confirm the accuracy of leaders' judgements particularly in writing. Regular testing and periodic assessments have also helped leaders and teachers to gain an accurate view of where pupils are in their learning.
- Leaders have made some significant progress in addressing the areas for improvement. For example, leaders have refined and developed systems for assessing the progress pupils make. As a result, pupils who are not on track to make good progress or meet the expected standards are identified quickly, and support is put in place to help them catch up.
- Leaders have quite rightly taken concerns about the decline in pupils' progress seriously. They have successfully used guidance from senior advisers and have achieved an effective structure to the teaching and learning of writing. Evidence suggests that more pupils are on track to reach both expected and greater depth in writing at both key stages.
- Leaders have carefully considered how best to use the pupil premium funding to raise achievement. For example, learning mentors successfully support disadvantaged pupils to learn more confidently and safely so that they make good progress in line with other pupils nationally.
- The leader of SEND demonstrates an unwavering commitment to pupils who need extra support to attend school and benefit from all that is on offer. Over time, she has completely reviewed all systems so that pupils get the quality first teaching in class and the extra support as and when they need it. She closely checks individual pupils' progress and works with teachers, additional adults, parents and agencies to adapt provision. Pupils with SEND make good and better progress from their starting points.
- Physical education (PE) and sports primary funding is used to provide specialist provision. Teachers learn and develop their skills from an experienced coach to effectively deliver PE. Funding has also been used for sports and playground equipment. However, pupils spoken with and some parents commented on the lack of extra-curricular PE.
- Leaders have designed a rich curriculum that inspires and motivates pupils to follow up learning in class in their own time. Year 5 pupils excitedly discussed their topic work on mountains, demonstrating wide knowledge, including the formation of mountain ranges, and the Mars mountain Olympus Mons. They also shared their views and gave valid reasons on whether mountaineers Mallory and Irvin successfully reached the summit of Mount Everest.
- Many parents who responded to Ofsted's free-text service were very positive about the leadership of the school. One parent typically commented: 'It's a fantastic school, it's well led; my children are well supported and any concerns I have are dealt with

straight away.' Another added, 'I cannot praise the school enough. My two daughters are absolutely thriving here. The teaching team are outstanding and very approachable... I travel to get to school and wouldn't dream of putting them anywhere else.' These views were typical of many.

- Leaders of subjects other than English and mathematics have effective action plans to develop their subjects further. Leaders have undertaken subject-specific training to help develop their own knowledge and skills. They are keen, for example, to develop subject-specific vocabulary routinely within lessons.
- Leaders' systems for assessing and monitoring pupils' progress are fit for purpose and give leaders detailed information of where pupils are in their learning. However, not all teachers are fully proficient in using this information to plan activities that will help pupils to move on quickly and make even better progress in their learning.
- Leaders' monitoring ensures that they know the school well. However, plans for improvement are not linked closely enough to the progress pupils make in each subject across the school.

Governance of the school

- Governors have ensured that they have a more detailed understanding of and can articulate clearly the impact of leaders' work. Revised plans have helped to successfully address some of the areas for improvement, including improving the quality of teaching, learning and assessment in writing.
- Governors bring a wealth of different skills to the role and play a significant part in the school community. They all have a specific subject area and make regular visits and report back to the full governing body on their findings.
- They seek feedback from parents and have acted upon the feedback given. For example, they are more visible to parents now by attending more school events. In addition, they now publish a governor newsletter to inform parents and stakeholders of the different governor roles, what they do and how they govern the school.
- Governors are well informed about leaders' work through governing body meetings, headteacher's report and through their regular monitoring visits. Governor minutes show that they ask school leaders appropriate questions about the progress pupils make. They then follow up with visits to classes and speak with staff and pupils to give them a good understanding of the impact of leaders' actions.
- Following end of year results in writing, governors sought external assurance that school leaders' judgements were accurate. They subsequently followed up with monitoring visits that included speaking with leaders and looking at pupils' work. Evidence shows that where they have challenged leaders, changes have been made leading to improvement in the quality of teaching, learning and assessment.
- Governors are working with leaders to ensure that plans for improvement are more concise and are focused on improving outcomes for all pupils in all subjects.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

- Safeguarding is a strength within the school. Governors routinely carry out checks on safeguarding practice at the school.
- Leaders and teachers are committed to ensuring that pupils are safe and attend school regularly. Staff understand their responsibilities and complete the relevant training in respect to safeguarding children. Processes are clear, and concerns are followed up swiftly. Files are well kept, and records are suitably detailed.
- The school's single central record and employee files are well maintained and contain all statutory information. All adults have undergone the necessary checks to be suitable to work with children.
- Pupils told the inspector that they feel safe at school and almost all parents who responded to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, agreed that their children are safe and well looked after.
- Pupils are taught e-safety. They have an age-appropriate understanding of the potential dangers from working online. They know how to protect themselves and who they need to tell if they have any concerns.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Leaders' monitoring of teaching accurately evaluates teaching, learning and assessment as good. Leaders have made improving the quality of teaching, learning and assessment a central focus of their work. They have taken swift action to address weaknesses and observations carried out by the inspection team and scrutiny of workbooks confirmed this view.
- Teachers demonstrate good subject knowledge in the teaching of reading, writing and mathematics. This enables them to use careful questioning to help pupils expand their ideas, gain a deeper understanding of the task and improve their work.
- Pupils' workbooks clearly show a standardised approach to the teaching of mathematics. It is evident that leaders' action plans are being embedded across the school. For example, different challenges for pupils with different abilities are evident in lessons. Number recall, reasoning and problem-solving are central to teachers' approach to the teaching of mathematics.
- Pupils apply their phonics knowledge well in their reading and writing. The focus on ensuring that pupils are secure at each phase means that pupils have become confident and fluent readers.
- Pupils across the school enjoy reading. Leaders have successfully improved pupils' comprehension skills. In Year 2, inspectors observed pupils excitedly exploring the texts of Anthony Browne. The teacher enthused the pupils with a wide range of rich, colourful books by the author. In pairs, pupils maturely articulated similarities between them, building on what they had already learned and told inspectors why they enjoyed the books.
- English is taught well across the school. There is a very clear writing structure that has been refined further since the inspection in November 2018. This has seen a rapid improvement in pupils' outcomes, particularly in Year 1, where pupils are writing at

length with increasing accuracy. Pupils in key stage 1 are confident learners. They write well independently and make decisions by themselves to look up words to help them with their spelling. They write sentences, forming letters correctly and which are accurately punctuated.

- Science is taught well and enthuses pupils. Teachers plan lessons that test pupils' thinking and allow them to explain what they know. For example, pupils in Year 4 conducted a sorting activity to compare and group different types of materials. Using this knowledge, they designed an episode of a science television programme to explain their learning. Pupils showed a secure understanding of what atoms look like in solids, liquids and gases. In Year 5, pupils were able to tell inspectors that Pluto isn't a planet any more because it doesn't meet the three criteria needed.
- Pupils are immersed in their exciting topics before they start writing. In Year 6, pupils had researched the Titanic thoroughly and looked at the topic from a wide range of perspectives. Pupils told inspectors that because of this work beforehand they have lots of factual ideas to help them write. Pupils write well, with imagination and at length in a range of genres.
- Most teachers have high expectations of what pupils can do, particularly in English. Teachers model effectively and enable pupils to learn from each other. In this way, the pupils know how they can improve on their work. One pupil commented that her target was to write more cohesively. Pupils told inspectors that they value the guidance from teachers.
- Some teachers use the termly pupil progress information well to move pupils on in their learning. However, not all teachers are using the detailed information that leaders provide to move pupils, particularly the middle attaining pupils, on quickly enough so that more pupils reach the higher standards of attainment and make the good and better progress they should.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils told inspectors that they enjoy school and the teachers help them to learn. In lessons, they have positive attitudes towards their learning and are keen to engage in discussions with adults about their work.
- The school's values of 'Aspire, Persevere, Achieve' help to develop confident and resilient individuals. Pupils look forward to receiving certificates at the end of the week that recognise their behaviour towards a specific value. Parents also appreciate this and commented that: 'These certificates are great for those that are not as good academically as other children but have other qualities.'
- Pupils talk maturely about how families are different and that family is not just the traditional idea of husband, wife and child.
- Pupils understand cultural diversity because they learn about different religions and know about people who come to Britain from different countries. Pupils learn about

equality and could maturely discuss their work on the plight of the suffragettes and how events and actions have made a difference to them personally and today's society.

- Pupils could all confidently talk about e-safety. For example, Year 2 could talk about 'think before you click'. Year 3 knew about the importance of keeping personal details safe.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils behave well in and around the school. In class, they are enthusiastic learners and told inspectors they enjoy their learning. Most pupils demonstrated positive attitudes to learning in all lessons visited.
- Pupils spoken with understand the importance of school and the new learning that takes place. They enjoy opportunities to share their learning with each other in class. Pupils work together sensibly. They remain on task and complete the work expected from them.
- Pupils know about the different types of bullying and say it rarely happens. Incident logs confirm this. Pupils know that they can speak with an adult if they are worried, and their concerns will be dealt with.
- Pupils are sociable and polite. They listen to each other and adults attentively.
- Leaders have raised the profile of attendance so that parents and pupils are aware of the impact of non-attendance. Attendance is currently average. In accordance with her legal duty and the school's attendance policy, the headteacher is taking measures to reduce further the number of unauthorised absences caused by parents taking their children out in school time.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Over the previous three years, there has been a decline in the progress pupils made from the end of key stage 1 to the end of key stage 2. However, as a result of decisive actions taken by leaders, the accurate assessment systems that are now in place demonstrate that current pupils are making good overall progress in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Leaders' assessment information shows that for current pupils, most are meeting national expectations at the expected and higher standards in reading, writing and mathematics. This was confirmed by discussions with pupils, work in their books and in lessons.
- Pupils' work showed that across both key stages, grammar, punctuation and spelling are strengths. Inspectors saw good examples of where skills are applied well in pupils' writing. Pupils' workbooks show that pupils are proud of their work and present it well with neatly joined handwriting. They routinely draft and edit to improve their work. In key stage 2, pupils were able to talk confidently about when they should use the passive voice as opposed to the active voice in their writing. They had a good

understanding of when to use formal and informal language.

- The school's focus on mathematics has seen an improvement over time in what pupils can do. Pupils in key stages 1 and 2 are confident at recalling number facts. They are given opportunities to apply these skills to problem solving and reasoning. Pupils told inspectors they particularly enjoy mathematics. Most pupils make good progress in mathematics across both key stages.
- Pupils who are disadvantaged and those with SEND are very well supported to learn. SEND pupils make good and better progress from their different starting points.
- Pupils develop a good understanding of history and geography through their topic work. They have many opportunities to consolidate their learning through writing tasks and can talk confidently about what they have learned.
- Pupils attain well in phonics with almost all pupils consistently meet the expected standards. The proportion of pupils who reach the higher standards in reading at the end of key stage 2 has been above national averages for the last two years.
- On the whole, pupils are being challenged through different activities. Pupils who spoke to inspectors say they feel they are being challenged, particularly in mathematics. However, teachers are not yet using leaders' assessment information well enough to closely focus on pupils who have the potential to make even better progress and meet the higher standards.

Early years provision

Requires improvement

- Instability of teaching staff over the last year has meant that the good provision in the early years has not been sustained. Teaching is not consistently planned well to meet the needs of the children. Consequently, too many children are not making the progress of which they are capable.
- Children enter Reception typically being able to do what is expected for their age. However, teaching and learning activities do not consider children's starting points well enough and this is particularly the case for the most able children.
- The early years provision is bright and well resourced. The outside area is fit for purpose with lots of activities to support and develop children's dexterity and physical development. However, adults do not always intervene to probe children's understanding or extend children's learning when they are working independently. As a result, children are not making the good and better progress they should. In these situations, teaching is too variable.
- Children working in small groups with adults make good progress in their learning. For example, inspectors observed this in guided reading, where children listened well and could talk about characters' feelings while predicting what might happen in a story. The adult questioning helped children to develop their language and comprehension skills.
- School leaders are successfully addressing the weaknesses in children's progress, particularly in writing and mathematics. Experienced teachers are sharing best practice to ensure that teachers' expectations of what children can do when they enter Reception are raised. Evidence shows that this is already having an impact on

children's phonics applied in their writing.

- Adults know children well. They set high expectations of behaviour and children have positive attitudes to learning. Children listen well, know daily routines and move from one task to another with no fuss. Children are happy and sociable and play well together.
- Many children leave Reception with a good level of development. The school shares information regularly with parents so that they can support children at home. However, assessment systems are not being used well enough to move pupils' learning on quickly enough. This is particularly the case in writing and mathematics.

School details

Unique reference number	115070
Local authority	Essex
Inspection number	10086790

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	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	217
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Nicola Adams
Headteacher	Julie Harper
Telephone number	01787 460 362
Website	www.stpetersch.schooljotter2.com
Email address	admin@st-peters.essex.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	1 November 2018

Information about this school

- The headteacher took up post in September 2015.
- A small number of pupils come from minority ethnic backgrounds.
- The proportion of pupils with SEND is below the national average.
- The percentage of disadvantaged pupils is below the national average.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed teaching and learning across all year groups.
- The inspectors held meetings with the headteacher, governors and school staff.
- The inspectors looked at pupils' written work, information on pupils' attainment and progress, curriculum planning, and records of behaviour and safety. The inspectors also looked at the minutes of governing body meetings, safeguarding documents, including mandatory checks made on the recruitment of new staff, and the school's website.
- Documentation from external advisers and the local authority was also scrutinised.
- Discussions were held with pupils representing every year group and ten Year 5 pupils, and informal conversations took place during lesson and breaktimes.
- The inspectors took account of 44 responses to Ofsted's online parental questionnaire, Parent View, and 32 responses to Ofsted's free-text service. In addition, inspectors considered 43 responses from pupils who responded to Ofsted's pupils' survey and the staff who responded to Ofsted's staff survey.
- An inspector also spoke with parents at the beginning of the school day.

Inspection team

Cindy Impey, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Simon Bell

Ofsted Inspector

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