

St Columba Church of England Primary Academy

Tewkesbury Avenue, Fareham, Hampshire PO15 6LL

Inspection dates

26–27 February 2019

| Overall effectiveness | Inadequate |
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| Effectiveness of leadership and management | Requires improvement |
| 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 | Requires improvement |

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an inadequate school

- Over time, there have been widespread changes to the school's leadership. This has had a negative impact on the quality of education and on parents' and carers' confidence in the school.
- Leaders do not have a fully clear understanding of how well groups of pupils are achieving. This limits their ability to target improvements accurately enough.
- Outcomes for pupils are inadequate because pupils make weak progress across the school. This includes pupils from vulnerable groups.
- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is inadequate. Teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve are too low.
- Leaders' improvement planning lacks clarity.
- In some lessons, disruptive behaviour prevents pupils from learning as well as they should.
- Teachers deal with poor behaviour inconsistently. Behaviour records are not evaluated well enough.
- The early years requires improvement. Until very recently, there is little evidence that children have been provided with challenging opportunities to learn across all areas of the early years curriculum.
- Teachers do not provide pupils with enough opportunities to reason and solve mathematical problems.
- Teaching lacks challenge, especially for the most able.
- The teaching of some aspects of reading is particularly weak.

The school has the following strengths

- The arrival of the current principal heralded greater capacity for improvement, and the impact is becoming evident. As a result, the quality of teaching and learning is beginning to improve. Middle leaders have a good understanding of how well subjects are taught. Attendance has also improved.
- Recent improvements in the leadership of the early years have strengthened this area of the school.
- Arrangements to safeguard pupils are effective.
- The broad curriculum supports pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well.

Full report

In accordance with section 44(2) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires significant improvement, because it is performing significantly less well than it might in all the circumstances reasonably be expected to perform.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching and thereby outcomes across the school by ensuring that teachers:
 - have consistently high expectations of what pupils can achieve, including in the presentation of their work
 - provide work that is consistently challenging and well matched to pupils' current knowledge and skills, particularly for most-able pupils and disadvantaged pupils
 - provide more opportunities for pupils to reason mathematically and to tackle problems that require them to apply the mathematics they have learned
 - develop pupils' love of reading and check regularly that they are reading books suited to their ability, moving them on as soon as it is clear they are ready.
- Improve leadership and management by making sure that:
 - leaders at all levels, including governors and the academy trust, understand their roles clearly so that they can work together to drive necessary improvements
 - systems for tracking and monitoring pupils' achievement provide an accurate picture of how well groups of pupils are achieving, so that leaders and teachers can intervene swiftly to accelerate progress where needed
 - governors are provided with regular, accurate information about pupils' progress so that they can hold senior leaders closely to account
 - improvement plans contain measurable success criteria by which leaders at all levels can be held stringently to account
 - communication with parents is improved to regain their confidence.
- Improve behaviour by ensuring that:
 - all staff tackle inappropriate behaviour, derogatory language and bullying consistently and decisively
 - all pupils who are involved in incidents of poor behaviour are treated justly and fairly
 - records of poor behaviour are recorded systematically, so that leaders can evaluate the impact of their actions and target further improvements.

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

Requires improvement

- An extended, unsettled period has resulted in extensive changes to the school's senior leadership, staff and governors. During this time, the school has had three principals as well as a continual turnover of staff. This has had a wholly negative impact on outcomes for pupils.
- The academy trust understands the significant challenges faced by the school. It has brought about some improvements in the recent past by raising expectations and strengthening accountability of senior leaders. However, the trust's actions have not yet brought about the intended improvement in outcomes.
- A culture of low expectations has been evident in the school in the last few years. At times, efforts to improve outcomes for pupils have met with resistance from some parents and staff. However, the current principal, leaders and governors all embrace a vision for a school that is not only caring but also fosters high academic achievement.
- The recently written 'rapid improvement action plan' replaced a strategic action plan that leaders judged to be unwieldy, tackling too many areas at once. The rapid action plan focuses unswervingly on improving the quality of teaching to drive improvements in outcomes. However, the plan requires strengthening so that there are clear, measurable success criteria by which leaders at all levels can be stringently held to account.
- The school's system for tracking pupils' progress is ineffective and prevents leaders from having an accurate understanding of how well groups of pupils are achieving. Leaders understand this and already have plans to use a system that better fits the needs of the school.
- Leaders have only recently started to explore ways of identifying small steps that pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) need to make progress from their different starting points.
- The spending of the pupil premium funding is ineffective. Leaders have a good understanding of the barriers that disadvantaged pupils face, but their actions are not enabling pupils to overcome these barriers and catch up with others nationally.
- Many parents have lost confidence in the school. They feel that there is poor communication and inconsistent teaching, and have been left confused at who is teaching their child from day to day. Other parents have a more positive view, pointing to improvement in communication and greater consistency.
- Staff morale has suffered with the continual changes to the school. However, many are positive about the current changes that are being made to the school by the principal.
- Along with other leaders, the principal has made changes that are tackling incidents of poor behaviour and improving the quality of teaching. She is fully aware of the challenges that the school faces, but can point to recent improvements in these areas of the school.
- Leaders provide regular training for staff in school to help develop their skills and improve teaching. The academy trust provides support and advice for leaders,

including from colleagues in other schools in the trust. Staff also benefit from attending events organised by the local authority. The impact of these has been weak but is now improving.

- The leaders of English and mathematics have a good understanding of how well their subjects are being taught. They recognise strengths and weaknesses in pupils' work and talk clearly about initiatives in place to bring about improvements. For example, in writing, clear evidence exists that carefully planned sequences of lessons that build on pupils' previous learning are helping pupils to make stronger progress.
- The curriculum is broad and provides interesting and, at times, exciting opportunities for pupils to learn in a range of subjects. It caters well for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and helps them to understand fundamental British values. Pupils benefit from trips to places such as Portchester Castle and Portsmouth Naval Dockyard as well as from visitors to the school.
- Pupils achieve well in sports and physical education. Leaders ensure that the primary physical education and sport premium funding is used successfully to provide pupils with experiences of sports and events both in and beyond the school.

Governance of the school

- The relationship between governors and the academy trust has been strained and difficult at times. Governors have met recently with officers from the trust to air their concerns, so that they can work more closely together to drive much-needed improvements in the school.
- Governors have the right skills, experience and enthusiasm to fulfil their roles effectively. They understand the needs of the school and are keen to hold senior leaders to account and drive improvements. Their meetings cover a wide range of important topics, including aspects of teaching and pupils' outcomes. However, governors feel frustrated that they are not provided with enough clear information about how well pupils are achieving.
- Governors undertake regular visits to the school to check that what they are being told is accurate. Their reports are rich in detail and evaluative, containing areas to follow up in future meetings.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. The strong culture of safeguarding in the school is underpinned by regular training and well-understood policies and practice.
- All staff understand how to recognise signs that a pupil may be at risk. They know the importance of recording and reporting their concerns. When the need arises, leaders engage with external agencies to secure the well-being of vulnerable pupils.
- Leaders ensure that the right checks are carried out on adults in the school, which are recorded on the single central record. Governors make sure that these checks have been carried out. There was a minor error on the single central record at the start of the inspection, but this was corrected swiftly.

- Pupils learn how to stay safe in a range of situations. Visits from such people as the fire brigade help reinforce this. Even the youngest pupils learn about the potential risks of being online. They understand how to avoid these risks, for example by never disclosing personal information or sharing pictures of themselves.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Inadequate

- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is inadequate because it has led to weak progress over time. This has prevented pupils from achieving as well as they should.
- Teaching is beginning to improve as a result of leaders' carefully targeted plans for staff training. However, improvements in teaching have not yet had time to be reflected in better outcomes for pupils.
- Teachers do not have consistently high expectations of what pupils can achieve. This is reflected by work in pupils' books, which is of variable quality. In some books, pupils show little or no care or pride in their work.
- Teachers do not plan tasks that are shaped carefully to ensure that pupils are challenged consistently. As a result, progress slows for some pupils, especially the most able.
- Staff do not check on pupils' learning systematically during lessons. As a result, pupils' mistakes and misconceptions are not spotted quickly enough. Similarly, teachers miss opportunities to move pupils on to more challenging work when required.
- The teaching of reading is ineffective. Pupils do not develop a real enthusiasm for reading because teachers are slow to move pupils on to more challenging books when it is clear that they are ready. As a result, pupils become bored with the books they read because they are too easy for them.
- Staff do not offer enough guidance to pupils to help them broaden their range of books and authors to become enthusiastic readers. However, more is now being done to help pupils enjoy reading, such as the 'break the chain' reward system, where reading regularly at home rewards pupils with prizes of books of their own choice.
- Teachers do not systematically equip pupils with the higher-order reading skills needed to gain a deeper understanding of texts. When pupils try to gather meaning from a text, they typically resort to opinions rather than using skills such as inference and deduction.
- Lower-ability pupils struggle to read the texts provided in reading lessons. They are not supported effectively to become independent readers.
- In mathematics, teachers provide work that is set at age-related expectations. However, pupils are not given enough opportunities either to develop reasoning and problem-solving skills or to apply the mathematics that they have learned.
- Lower-ability pupils rarely move beyond performing calculations or doing closely guided work. Inspectors could find little evidence of what they can achieve independently. Most-able pupils spend too long in mathematics lessons on work they can already do. Hence, they do not make good progress over time.

- Teachers' subject knowledge in mathematics is not good enough. In some year groups, there is clear evidence of pupils making mistakes which are not acknowledged by teachers.
- In writing, pupils write in a range of genres and styles and most are making good progress. There is stronger progress in Year 4 and Year 6. Improvements in the teaching of writing require teachers to plan sequences of lessons that build on pupils' prior knowledge and skills and equip them with more adventurous vocabulary. Where this is being done well, pupils are making stronger progress.
- The teaching of phonics is effective because staff have good subject knowledge, teaching carefully and precisely.
- Teachers provide helpful homework that enables pupils to practise important skills such as spelling and reading at home. At times, teachers also give pupils good ideas for projects that they can do at home to supplement and enrich their learning.

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 have mostly positive attitudes to learning. They work hard and try their best. However, in a few lessons, disruptive behaviour prevents pupils from learning as well as they should and diverts the teacher's attention from helping other pupils to learn.
- Pupils have a good understanding of bullying in its various forms. However, bullying is not always dealt with decisively. Although it stops for a while, it often resumes before long.
- Pupils understand how to look after themselves. They are active at playtimes and understand how to eat healthily. Physical education is popular with pupils because sports coaches offer a wide range of different activities which pupils take up enthusiastically.
- Pupils have a good understanding of tolerance and respect. Older pupils understand clearly that friends can hold very different views about important matters, such as faith. There have been no recorded racist incidents at the school.
- Pupils enjoy taking up the various opportunities to show responsibility and to serve others. Leaders have plans to introduce a school council to give pupils a greater say in the running of the school.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement. Some staff and parents have concerns over the behaviour of pupils and the way that leaders deal with incidents of poor behaviour. Incidents are usually dealt with quickly to de-escalate any potential disruption. However, justice is not always seen to be done because those who behave badly are not always helped to understand why they are in the wrong.

- Behaviour has begun to improve in the school because the principal made it her first priority. Teachers now welcome pupils at the start of day with a handshake and a personal greeting. This presents pupils with a clear model of respectful, friendly behaviour to follow.
- Until recently, senior leaders have not kept detailed records of poor behaviour. This leaves them unable to identify where their actions have had the most success in managing behaviour and to identify areas for further improvement.
- Some pupils use thoughtless, unkind language. Pupils say that this is often designed to get a reaction from a classmate. Teachers usually deal with these issues as they arise, but at times staff ask pupils to sort it out for themselves, and the behaviour persists.
- The current behaviour policy lacks clear consequences for poor conduct. Plans are well advanced for a stronger, consistently applied policy to be implemented.
- Pupils typically behave well at playtime and around the school, including at lunchtime. They mostly get on well together and play happily. The school is mostly a calm, orderly environment.
- Where pupils have well-recognised social and emotional needs, senior leaders have provided effective support to help these pupils to learn to work calmly.
- Attendance has improved over time and is now in line with that seen nationally. The attendance of disadvantaged pupils and pupils with SEND has also improved.

Outcomes for pupils

Inadequate

- Outcomes in recent years have been inadequate and have shown no sign of improvement. In 2018, pupils' progress across key stage 2 dipped and was well below that seen nationally in reading, writing and mathematics. Progress in reading has been very weak for two out of the last three years.
- At both key stage 1 and key stage 2 in the last three years, the proportions of pupils who have achieved and exceeded age-related expectations in reading, writing and mathematics have been consistently well below the national average. In 2018, the proportions achieving the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics were even lower than in previous years at the end of key stage 2. No pupils have achieved the higher standard in all three subjects in the last three years.
- The progress of pupils currently in the school is weak, uneven and inconsistent because of poor teaching over time. Pupils who were attaining at and above the national expectations at the end of Year 2 have not made enough progress. Many are not on track to achieve as well at the end of Year 6.
- Lower-ability pupils make better progress than others in writing, because work is pitched at their ability level. However, in mathematics, these pupils make weaker progress because work is typically too hard for them.
- The most able pupils make slow progress because teachers' expectations of them are too low.
- Disadvantaged pupils make the same slow, inconsistent progress as other pupils. The difference between their attainment and that of other pupils nationally shows no sign

of diminishing.

- The progress of pupils with SEND is weak and inconsistent. Some interventions have not been delivered appropriately, which has held pupils back, restricting their progress.
- Pupils in the assessment resources provision make slow progress because work does not always match pupils' individual starting points or targets.
- The proportion of pupils who achieve the expected standards in phonics at the end of Year 1 has improved steadily over recent years. In 2018, this figure was in line with the national average.

Early years provision

Requires improvement

- The very recently appointed leader of the early years has wasted no time in evaluating the strengths and weaknesses of the provision and shows clear vision and ambition to increase challenge for children. However, as she has been in post for so little time, it is impossible to demonstrate the impact of her actions.
- Outcomes in the early years have been variable in recent years. In 2017, the proportion of children who reached a good level of development was in line with the national average. In 2018, this proportion dipped to below that seen nationally and similar to the figure seen in 2016. This means that children are not always ready for the greater challenges in key stage 1.
- Until very recently, children have not had a broad range of challenging and demanding tasks across all of the early learning goals. There is little evidence to demonstrate children's achievement, particularly in their knowledge and understanding of the world, aspects of their social and emotional development (managing their feelings) and physical development.
- Children are making increasing progress from their starting points in reading, writing and mathematics. Leaders have placed a strong focus on equipping children with the early skills needed for success in these subjects.
- The teaching of phonics is currently strong as a result of recent improvements in the quality of teaching and the good subject knowledge of staff. They teach children how to sound out and blend different sounds accurately.
- The teaching of mathematics is also effective. Staff have a good understanding of individual children's learning and use a range of approaches to help them progress from their starting points.
- Parents have opportunities to contribute to learning, but this is something leaders are working to improve. Some parents celebrate achievements at home with a 'proud cloud'. However, other parents do not engage in their children's education so readily.
- The learning environment is well organised and inviting. It provides many opportunities for children to learn inside and outdoors and to apply their learning in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Classroom visits showed that children are happy and enjoy school. They get on well with each other and behave well. Children have positive attitudes towards learning because staff provide them with interesting experiences that arouse their curiosity and

sustain their concentration. For example, children were absorbed with making boats out of tin foil and seeing how many small objects it could carry before sinking. They enjoyed reshaping their models and talking about how to improve their design.

- Transition arrangements include visits to local pre-school providers, 'stay and play' sessions in the term before children start school and home visits prior to children joining the school. These all play an important part in helping children to settle quickly in school.
- Children are safe in the early years. They are supervised well indoors and out. Staff have had the right training to equip them for this aspect of their work.

School details

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| Unique reference number | 138509 |
| Local authority | Hampshire |
| Inspection number | 10053304 |

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

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| Type of school | Primary |
| School category | Academy sponsor-led |
| Age range of pupils | 4 to 11 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number of pupils on the school roll | 163 |
| Appropriate authority | Portsmouth and Winchester Diocesan Academy Trust |
| Chair | Reverend Will Hughes |
| Principal | Tracey Marsh |
| Telephone number | 01329 843226 |
| Website | www.stcolumbaacademy.co.uk |
| Email address | adminoffice@stcolumba.hants.sch.uk |
| Date of previous inspection | 6–7 July 2016 |

Information about this school

- St Columba Church of England Primary Academy is a smaller-than-average primary school. There are seven single-age classes. It is sponsored by Portsmouth and Winchester Diocesan Academy Trust, which is responsible for the governance of the school. The school has a local governing body, and the trust's 'scheme of empowerment' clarifies what governance functions are delegated to this body by the trust.
- The school also has a resource-based provision for 10 children from Reception to Year 2 who have a range of needs, including language and developmental delay.
- The principal took up the role in September 2018. An interim principal led the school for two terms after the previous principal left in December 2017. Since then there has been a period of considerable turnover, in which many teachers, support staff and governors have come and gone.

- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils is well above the national average. Levels of deprivation are above those seen nationally.
- The proportion of pupils who are from ethnic minorities is below the national average. The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is well below that seen nationally.
- The proportion of pupils with SEND is well above that seen in other schools across the country.
- The school had its most recent inspection of denominational education given to pupils and of the content of the school's collective worship, under section 48 of the Education Act 2005, in March 2018.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors held several meetings with the principal and middle leaders about various aspects of the school's performance, including leaders' self-evaluation of the school and how well pupils are currently achieving.
- The lead inspector met with the chair of the governing body and three other governors. He also met with three representatives of the academy trust, including the chief executive officer.
- Inspectors met with several middle leaders, including those responsible for mathematics, English, the early years and special educational needs provision. The leader of French discussed the wider curriculum with the lead inspector.
- An inspector also held a meeting with a group of six staff members, including teachers and learning support assistants. Conversations were held with a number of staff members throughout the inspection.
- Inspectors observed learning in all classes. Some of these observations were undertaken jointly with the principal.
- With the principal and middle leaders, inspectors looked at a range of pupils' work from across the curriculum.
- The inspectors listened to pupils from Years 2, 4, 5 and 6 read and talked to a group of them about school life. They also met pupils on the playground at playtime and lunchtime and observed behaviour at free times around the school.
- Inspectors took account of the 33 responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, and the 54 written comments that were submitted. The lead inspector also considered two letters from parents and one from a member of staff. Questionnaire responses from 31 staff and 35 pupils were also considered.
- Inspectors met with parents on the playground before and after school. The lead inspector also met with a group of parents to discuss their views of the academy.
- An inspector visited the breakfast club run by the school.
- Inspectors looked at a range of documents, including those recording the work of the governors and the single central record of checks. They examined information on pupils' current progress and scrutinised the school's safeguarding procedures.

Inspection team

Bruce Waelend, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Christine Bulmer

Ofsted 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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