

Newington Church of England Primary School

School Lane, Newington, Sittingbourne, Kent ME9 7LB

Inspection dates

14–15 May 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	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- This is a happy, caring school. Pupils have very positive attitudes to learning and are enthusiastic in all they do. Pupils are welcoming and friendly, behave well and are respectful to adults and each other. Pupils are proud of their school and their achievements.
- The executive headteacher has taken decisive and effective action to secure improvements in the school. The head of school and governors share the ambition and vision to provide the best for pupils.
- Pupils, including those who are disadvantaged and pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), generally achieve well and are currently making good progress from their starting points. However, progress is a little uneven across the school.
- Effective action has been taken to improve pupils' achievement in mathematics. Leaders are keeping a close check on this to make sure that the new, successful approaches are fully embedded.
- Effective leadership of teaching means that the quality of teaching and learning is typically good. Further improvements are planned to eradicate inconsistencies and ensure that expectations for what pupils can achieve are high.
- The provision for children in the early years has strengthened. Children get a good start to their education, thrive and make good progress.
- The curriculum has been revised to ensure its breadth and balance. However, further development is ongoing to ensure that the curriculum is cohesive in its intention and implementation.
- Phonics skills are taught well, but pupils do not have enough opportunities to apply their skills across the key stage 1 curriculum.
- Leaders set great store in developing teachers' expertise and leadership skills. Many middle leaders are new to role and developing their skills. The impact of their work is not yet evident in pupils' outcomes.
- Staff work hard to build positive relationships with parents and carers and support them to help their children. Parents have confidence and trust in the leadership of the school and are positive about what the school offers their children.
- There is a strong culture of safeguarding. Pupils feel safe in school and are well looked after.
- Leaders have successfully improved attendance, although it remains slightly below the national average. The number of pupils who are persistently absent has been considerably reduced.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that pupils are given regular opportunities to apply their phonics skills across the key stage 1 curriculum.
- Sustain the current focus on improving mathematics to ensure that successful approaches are fully embedded across the school.
- Strengthen the impact of subject leaders so that planned curriculum improvements are embedded and teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve are raised.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- The executive headteacher has rapidly made her mark on the school, providing highly effective leadership that has inspired and refreshed the school's direction and purpose. With the head of school, she has swiftly identified the areas for improvement and significant changes have been made in a short space of time. Behaviour and attendance have improved and parents are much more supportive of the school than previously.
- In the period since the last inspection, the school has been through considerable turbulence, with changes in leadership and staffing and declining performance. The current teaching team are almost all new to the school, since the last inspection. The head of school has made a number of changes to re-establish a positive culture in the school.
- This strong team of the executive headteacher and head of school has quickly secured the confidence of parents. One parent wrote, 'The new leadership team are positive, approachable and fair.' Another commented: 'The school has improved tremendously in the last couple of years. The staff seem more content, and happy too. Any concerns are dealt with swiftly and the attitude of staff in general seems completely different.'
- Staff and governors are committed to the shared vision and aspiration. There are mutual benefits in working closely with the other primary school in the federation. Developing new leaders has a high priority, drawing on expertise and skills from other schools as well as that of the local authority's adviser, who provides valuable support. Middle leaders are largely new to their roles. They have action plans for their subjects or areas of responsibility and provide support to colleagues in a range of ways. It is too soon to see the full impact of their work on the quality of teaching and learning or pupils' outcomes.
- Rigorous and effective monitoring by the senior team ensures that there is a well-informed and accurate understanding of what is going well and the priorities to tackle next. There are clear milestones for when things will be achieved. These help leaders and governors to assess the impact of their actions.
- Improvements in the quality of teaching have helped to plug gaps that existed in pupils' learning. The senior team has built on the new positive culture and ethos and raised teachers' expectations.
- Staff are proud of the school and enjoy working there. They work well together and with colleagues in the other school in the federation. There is a positive and happy atmosphere. Staff appreciate the opportunities for training to enhance their skills and expertise. Teachers who are new to the profession are very positive about the support the school provides and are highly responsive to the advice they receive.
- Staff have every confidence in the school's leadership and work with the senior team to implement the changes that have been put in place. One parent wrote: 'The school has undergone many changes in the three years my son has been at the school, but we have always been kept well informed, the children's education and best interests are always at the heart of the decisions.'

- Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, including the promotion of fundamental British values, is promoted well and supports pupils' understanding of concepts such as tolerance, democracy and respect. These, along with the school's Christian values, are woven into daily life. 'Children mix well across all years and there is a strong current of the values embedded in all they do. I am very grateful my children can access such a positive environment every day,' was the view of another parent.
- The curriculum was an area that the executive headteacher identified as needing immediate revision to address the historical gaps in pupils' learning. Swift action has ensured that the curriculum is now broad and balanced and covers all the requirements of the national curriculum. Pupils enjoy the planned special events, including topic days, theatre trips and visitors to school, such as the visit of an orchestra. Further development of the curriculum is ongoing to ensure that it is cohesive, has a clear, shared intent and that its implementation has a greater impact on pupils' outcomes.
- Leaders make effective use of the additional funding from pupil premium, the physical education (PE) and sports premium and the funding for pupils with SEND. Leaders and governors monitor the use of this funding and its impact on the outcomes for the different groups of pupils. They ensure that it is being spent well and is making a difference to pupils' achievement.
- Only a small number of parents responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, but inspectors also looked at a large response to the school's own parental survey. There were many positive comments, for example: 'Teachers and headteachers are always around for a chat and the feel of the school is that they care very much for their pupils and want them to do well.' Another summed up the views of several parents with the comment, 'A wonderful school where children flourish.' The executive headteacher and the head of school have been relentless in their work to successfully secure the confidence and engagement of parents in the school. Parents support the school well and in practical ways too, for example by helping to further develop the outdoor sanctuary and creating a garden in the early years.

Governance of the school

- Governance is effective. Governors have an accurate understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. They know they are accountable and are well informed by senior leaders and their own monitoring.
- Governors are reflective and have strengthened their strategic work to hold leaders to account for the school's performance. They are not complacent and explore ways to further enhance their effectiveness. They have a range of appropriate skills and expertise to challenge and support leaders. Information about pupils' progress is scrutinised and probing questions are asked.
- Governors have oversight of additional funding, ensuring that it is spent wisely and makes a difference for pupils.
- Governors have secured an experienced leadership team for the school, to put it back on track after a period of turbulence, and ensure that improvement is rapid.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Staff, including those who are new, are effectively trained. They know the signs to look for and procedures to follow to report any concerns. They are aware of their responsibilities for keeping pupils safe. Senior leaders ensure that staff are vigilant.
- Leaders take prompt and effective action, including working closely with external agencies, to make sure that pupils receive appropriate and timely help, when necessary. Efficient and well-organised records are kept. Recruitment checks are completed thoroughly and efficiently. Leaders are tenacious in ensuring that all concerns and referrals are followed up swiftly.
- Pupils say that they feel safe in school and know how to keep themselves safe online. Staff and parents agree that the school keeps pupils safe. One parent expressed the positive views of many parents, writing: 'The staff all know the children personally and there is a community feeling at the school, everybody looks out for each other. My children all feel very safe and happy to go to school every day.'

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Pupils enjoy learning. There are very positive relationships between staff and pupils. Staff have a thorough knowledge of pupils and plan learning activities that engage them. Pupils feel that their teachers help them to learn well. They are proud of their achievements.
- Pupils work very well together, supporting each other successfully with their learning. Pupils demonstrate their positive attitudes in lessons and respond to teachers' high expectations for their conduct.
- Phonics skills are taught using the agreed phonics programme. Teachers follow this closely to ensure that the teaching of phonics is systematic. However, pupils do not always have enough opportunities to use and develop their skills across the key stage 1 curriculum.
- Teachers promote reading for enjoyment. High-quality children's literature is often the starting point for learning across a range of subjects, in addition to developing pupils' reading comprehension and writing skills.
- In mathematics, leaders identified gaps in pupils' learning. Effective strategies, including training to enhance teachers' skills, are improving teaching and learning in mathematics. All pupils are developing their mathematical reasoning skills and becoming increasingly adept at explaining their thinking. This is helping pupils to make stronger progress.
- Teachers at an early stage of their career are developing their skills well. They receive effective support from senior leaders. Teaching assistants generally work closely with teachers and make a good contribution to pupils' learning. They provide individuals and groups, including pupils with SEND and disadvantaged pupils, with well-targeted and appropriate extra support so that they learn successfully.
- Within the overall picture of good teaching and learning, there are some inconsistencies. These are where best practice is not yet fully embedded, and where teachers' expectations are not always high enough.

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils enjoy school and have very positive attitudes to learning, which helps them achieve well. The school is a calm, purposeful environment and pupils are polite, friendly and welcoming to visitors.
- Pupils appreciate the friendships they make at school, and play and learn together well. They are kind and caring, living up to and promoting the school's values of respect, honesty, kindness and perseverance.
- Staff provide a safe, nurturing environment. Vulnerable pupils receive additional care to support their emotional well-being. This boosts their confidence and self-esteem, enabling them to thrive.
- Parents agree that their children are well looked after. One parent wrote: 'From my daughter starting in Reception and beginning her education, to our older children taking their SATs and preparing for the transition to secondary, I couldn't fault the staff's commitment, not only to children's education but also to their emotional needs.'
- Pupils say that they feel safe in school. They learn how to keep safe in a range of situations, in and out of school, including keeping safe when online. Pupils told inspectors that there is no bullying in school as 'it's not acceptable', but that they are confident to turn to adults in school should any problems arise.
- Pupils have a good awareness of how to have a healthy lifestyle. At the start of the day, they participate in 'wake and shake' sessions or complete the 'daily mile'. Older pupils run the tuck shop, selling healthy snacks at playtime.
- Pupils enjoy the responsibilities they are given, for example being play leaders and buddies. They said they would like to do more.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. There is a calm, orderly atmosphere around the school. Behaviour in lessons is good and helps pupils to learn effectively and make strong progress. Pupils behave well on the playground and during lunchtimes. Pupils are aware of teachers' high expectations for their behaviour and clearly know what they should and should not do.
- Leaders have worked extremely hard to increase the school's overall attendance. As a result, attendance has improved and most pupils attend regularly. However, attendance remains just below the national average. Leaders keep a close check on patterns of absence for different groups and individuals. They ensure that there is robust follow-up if the school is not informed about the reason for a pupil's absence. The proportion of pupils who are persistently absent has decreased. Pupils are generally punctual for school.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- In 2018, at the end of key stage 2, pupils' progress in reading and writing had improved on the previous year and was in the average range, but progress in mathematics was below average. In 2018, writing attainment at the end of Year 2 and Year 6 was a strength, as the proportions of pupils achieving greater depth were above the national averages.
- Work in pupils' books and the school's own checks show that current pupils, including disadvantaged pupils, pupils with SEND and the most able, are making generally good progress in reading, writing and mathematics. However, the picture is a little uneven across the school. Pupils' progress, their positive attitudes to learning and their social skills prepare them well for the next stage of their education.
- The published information on pupils' attainment needs to be viewed with caution because of the small size of the Year 6 cohort in 2018. This meant that one pupil represented 5%. However, senior leaders, in their determination to improve achievement, have implemented a rigorous system to check on pupils' progress and the quality of teaching. This has enabled pupils to receive specific support to help them catch up if they are at risk of falling behind. As a result, the majority of current pupils are working at the expected standard for their age in reading, writing and mathematics, although there is a little variation across the school.
- At the end of Year 6, in 2018, progress in mathematics was weaker when compared to pupils' progress in writing and reading. Leaders' actions are addressing the legacy of gaps in pupils' learning and strengthening current pupils' progress. Leaders acknowledge that they need to continue the focus on mathematics to ensure that the improvements are embedded across the school.
- Phonics is taught well from the early years onwards. However, in key stage 1, some pupils do not always have enough opportunity to apply their skills across the curriculum and build on the skills learned in the Reception Year.
- Reading for pleasure is promoted well in key stage 2. Pupils enjoy a wide range of high-quality texts and can talk enthusiastically about their favourite authors and styles of writing.

Early years provision

Good

- Leaders' actions have had a positive impact on developing the environment and provision in the early years, improving outcomes for the children. Children now get a good start. They make strong progress across the curriculum because their learning needs are met effectively. They are well prepared to continue their learning in Year 1.
- Staff build children's skills by talking with children in a purposeful way to extend their language knowledge and skills. They ask questions to check children's understanding and develop their thinking and reasoning skills.
- A wide range of opportunities are available inside and outside, capturing children's interests and sparking their curiosity and imagination. Children were thrilled, excited and awe-struck to witness a baby blue tit emerge from a bird box for the first time.

- Children behave well. They quickly settle into the routines of the day and develop independence. They work and play happily together. Staff have a thorough knowledge of the children, and relationships are nurturing. They keep a close check on children's achievements and record of developments in children's learning journals, which are shared with parents.
- Staff ensure that systems to keep children safe in the early years are rigorous. For example, daily risk assessments are carried out to ensure that the classroom and the outside area are safe spaces to learn. All statutory welfare requirements are met. All necessary actions are taken to support children whose circumstances may make them vulnerable.

School details

Unique reference number	118649
Local authority	Kent
Inspection number	10088052

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	171
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Peter Marshall
Headteacher	Tara Deevoy (Executive Headteacher)
Telephone number	01795 842300
Website	www.newington.kent.sch.uk
Email address	headteacher@newington.kent.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	12–13 May 2015

Information about this school

- The school is federated with Lower Halstow Primary School.
- The executive headteacher was appointed in September 2018 and provides leadership for both schools. Newington Church of England Primary also has a head of school. Both schools share a governing body.
- This school is smaller than the average-sized primary school. There is one class in each year group.
- The proportion of pupils eligible for the pupil premium is below average.
- The proportion of pupils with SEND is above average.
- The school is a voluntary controlled Church of England primary within the Diocese of Canterbury. It was last inspected under section 48 of the Education Act 2005 in October 2016 and is due for reinspection in 2022.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed teaching and learning in all classes, accompanied by the executive headteacher or the head of school.
- Inspectors examined samples of pupils' work and talked to individuals and groups of pupils about their learning and to gather their views of the school. They heard some pupils read. They observed pupils' behaviour at breaktimes and lunchtimes.
- Discussions were held with the executive headteacher, the head of school, other leaders with key responsibilities and teachers who are at an early stage of their careers.
- Meetings were held with governors and with the local authority's adviser.
- The inspectors examined a range of documents, including leaders' checks on the school's performance and the quality of teaching and learning; the school improvement plan; information on pupils' progress; and records relating to safeguarding, pupils' behaviour and attendance.
- There were 37 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, including 16 free-text comments. An inspector spoke to some parents at the start of the day, and the school's own recent survey of parents was examined. This had 51 responses. One letter was received from the parish curate. Inspectors took account of 23 responses to Ofsted's staff questionnaire. There were three responses to Ofsted's pupil questionnaire. Inspectors examined the school's own recent survey of pupils, which had 81 responses.

Inspection team

Margaret Coussins, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Teresa Davies	Ofsted Inspector

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