

# St Nicholas Church of England Primary Academy

Fairfield Road, New Romney, Kent TN28 8BP

## Inspection dates

22–23 May 2019

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>Good</b>
Effectiveness of leadership and management	<b>Good</b>
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	<b>Good</b>
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	<b>Outstanding</b>
Outcomes for pupils	<b>Good</b>
Early years provision	<b>Good</b>
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Not previously inspected

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a good school

- This school is well led and managed. The highly effective headteacher, supported by senior leaders, aspires to ensure that all pupils have the best opportunities to achieve.
- A strong focus on responsibility and respect permeates the school. This is characterised by the very positive relationships that exist in the school.
- The quality of teaching is good. Teachers have high expectations of what pupils can achieve, and plan interesting lessons that capture pupils' interest and imagination. As a result, pupils' progress in reading, writing and mathematics is improving across the school.
- Outcomes are improving throughout the school, with more pupils achieving better standards, and increased numbers gaining higher levels of attainment in reading and writing. However, fewer pupils are reaching the higher levels in mathematics.
- Disadvantaged pupils, and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), achieve well. Good-quality interventions ensure that these pupils get the extra help they need to catch up.
- The provision in early years is good. Children settle quickly, are taught well and learn in a safe and secure environment.
- The parent council offers significant support to help the school improve. As a result, there is a strong community atmosphere where parents really feel that their contributions are valued and acted upon.
- Pupils' personal development is outstanding. Pupils have impeccable manners, are proud to be part of the school and have excellent attitudes to their learning. They show high levels of care for one another.
- Middle leaders are beginning to develop their roles and are effective in improving teaching. However, senior leaders recognise that middle leaders are not as yet fully accountable for their subjects or areas of responsibility.
- The curriculum meets effectively the needs of the pupils. Pupils enjoy the interesting topics on offer and enjoy visits that bring their learning to life. Leaders recognise that pupils have limited opportunities to use the skills they have developed in English and mathematics in other subjects.
- Pupils' behaviour is outstanding. There has been a significant improvement in behaviour over time. Pupils behave exceptionally well in lessons, on the playground and when moving around the school.

## Full report

### What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching and pupils' outcomes further by ensuring that teachers provide greater opportunities for pupils to:
  - use the skills they have learned in literacy and numeracy to develop and deepen their understanding of other subjects within the curriculum
  - practise problem-solving and reasoning skills in mathematics so that more pupils can reach higher levels of attainment.
- Increase the effectiveness of leadership and management by:
  - developing middle leaders' skills and knowledge, so they can drive continued improvements in their subjects or areas of responsibility.

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management

**Good**

- The highly effective headteacher, supported by a dynamic team, has been successful in developing a culture of cooperation and challenge. As a result, all aspects of the school are improving, particularly the progress that pupils are making in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Leaders have the desire, drive and ambition to achieve the very best for the pupils in the school. They have high expectations of what pupils can do and achieve. An uncompromising focus on pupils' personal development has made St Nicholas Church of England Primary Academy a place where pupils always come first.
- Key to the school's improvement has been its engagement with parents. The parent council has been highly effective in supporting the school as it continues to improve. The school's vision of 'ambition, perseverance, respect, trust, friendship and community' is strongly supported by parents. One parent's comments reflected the views of many: 'You really feel part of the school, part of its future, you can see that things are just getting better and better.'
- Leaders have a relentless focus on improving the quality of teaching in the school. Through the good practice that exists in the school, and a range of external expertise from across the trust, teaching is continually improving. A consistent approach to learning has been embedded through teachers learning from one another.
- Teaching is monitored effectively by leaders. There is frequent dialogue, where teachers are given helpful direction on how to improve the learning in their lessons. High expectations of what pupils can achieve is top of the teaching agenda, resulting in more pupils throughout the school making better progress.
- Middle leaders, some whom are relatively new in post, share senior leaders' desire for pupils to achieve their very best. They have been effective in improving aspects of teaching by coaching colleagues. They understand the necessity to develop their skills further, both to improve the outcomes for pupils and to develop capacity in leadership within the school.
- The curriculum has been completely rewritten to meet the needs of pupils better, utilising the rich resources available in the local community. Topics such as 'the history of toys' and 'marvellous me' capture pupils' interests and make learning relevant. All topics have trips or events to help bring learning to life. For example, Year 2 pupils visited the local Dungeness lighthouse to support their reading of 'The Lighthouse Keeper's Lunch', and Year 6 have visited Dover Castle to enrich their learning about the Tudors.
- Standards of work achieved across other subjects such as science and geography are similar to those achieved in literacy and numeracy. Leaders are reviewing the curriculum to identify more opportunities for pupils to use their English and mathematical skills to improve pupils' understanding and develop their learning. There are extensive extra-curricular opportunities, and sports funding has been used effectively to provide pupils with additional opportunities such as sailing and paddle-boarding.

- Disadvantaged pupils, and those with SEND, achieve well. Funding provided by the pupil premium is used efficiently to ensure that these pupils get the help they need. There are a number of interventions to make sure that these pupils get extra help in the areas they find difficult.
- Opportunities for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are plentiful, forming an integral part of their learning. Pupils consider questions such as 'What does it mean to be a Muslim in Britain?' or 'Is Easter important?' They are given many opportunities to express their views and to take responsible decisions. One pupil commented when asked about tolerance, 'You have to listen and learn from people, otherwise you won't get anywhere.'

### **Governance of the school**

- A new local governing body, appointed by the academy trust, has recently replaced the interim board. Three of the interim board members now form the core of the new governing body, which also includes dedicated parents. They have undertaken an audit and have an action plan in place to facilitate governors' development.
- Through their work on the interim board, governors know the school well. They have a good understanding of the strengths and areas that need further development. Trustees have worked closely with governors, providing effective induction training and ongoing support. As a result, governors are well equipped to ask searching and challenging questions to hold teachers and leaders effectively to account.
- Procedures for managing the performance of teaching staff are effective and transparent. Governors make informed decisions about teachers' pay progression.

### **Safeguarding**

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. There is a strong culture of safeguarding in the school, where everybody takes responsibility to make sure that pupils are as safe as they can be. The family liaison officer works effectively with families to ensure that they get the support they need, so that pupils get the best opportunities to succeed. Incidents concerning child welfare are meticulously recorded so that, at every step, pupils' best interests are a priority and appropriate actions are taken.
- New members of staff receive good-quality training in child protection, and this, together with ongoing training, ensures that staff are confident in dealing with any safeguarding and/or child protection issues that might arise.
- Governors are well trained, and monitor safeguarding effectively as part of their meetings. Procedures for vetting staff are rigorous, and the single central register is monitored regularly to ensure that pupils are kept safe from harm.

### **Quality of teaching, learning and assessment**

**Good**

- Leaders have judged the quality of teaching, learning and assessment to be good. Inspection evidence supports this evaluation. Most teachers demonstrate good subject

knowledge and plan interesting lessons that capture pupils' interest and imagination. Learning is fun and motivates pupils to learn. Pupils are given plenty of opportunity to discuss their work and challenge one another's ideas.

- Teachers use assessment information effectively to plan lessons and develop pupils' learning, building on what they already know and understand. As a result, pupils are making better progress in reading, writing and mathematics. In most cases the match of work to pupils' ability is appropriate, enabling pupils to feel challenged in their learning.
- Teachers know their pupils well. The strong relationships across the school ensure that there is mutual respect between teachers and pupils. Teachers instil a 'be your best' mentality in the pupils, developing their confidence in tackling work that challenges them. This was seen in one mathematics lesson where pupils were attempting to answer the question: 'Can all non-prime numbers be made from the addition of prime numbers?' Pupils doggedly pursued the answer to the extent that they carried on in the next mathematics lesson the following day.
- The teaching of reading is good. Phonics is well taught in the school from an early age, building on pupils' phonological knowledge, and steadily developing their confidence. Teachers focus on helping pupils to understand what they are reading, using rich texts that introduce new vocabulary. Class books are chosen specifically to develop and extend pupils' vocabulary. As a result, pupils' reading progress is improving and the proportion of pupils achieving the higher standards by the end of Year 6 is increasing.
- Writing has been a sustained focus in the school. Pupils are keen to write for a variety of purposes, such as poetry, newspaper articles and recounts. Pupils' writing is often inspired by class books, which provide them with a style they can understand and develop. Pupils are writing longer pieces of work using more complex sentences with a greater variety of punctuation. As a result, pupils are achieving better standards and more pupils are achieving the higher levels.
- In mathematics, number has been a focus throughout and is taught well, as evidenced in the work seen in books. While there are opportunities for pupils to use reasoning in number, this is not always the case in other areas such as shape, graphs and measures. As a result, not enough pupils have the necessary skills or experience to apply their knowledge to attain the higher standards seen in reading and writing. The mathematics leader is aware of this and is already taking steps to address the issue, providing better opportunities for the most able pupils to deepen their learning and understanding.
- Teaching assistants are deployed effectively in supporting pupils who find learning more difficult. Teaching assistants work closely with the class teachers and have a positive impact on helping pupils improve their learning.
- Teaching in other areas of the curriculum, such as science, history and geography, is consistent, as illustrated by the work that pupils produce in their books. Subject leaders and teachers are working hard to develop teaching in these areas by providing pupils with greater opportunities to use the skills they have learned in English and mathematics to develop their understanding further.

**Personal development and welfare**

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding.
- The school takes great care to make pupils' personal development the centre of all that it tries to do. Respect, trust and care for pupils is evident in all aspects of school life.
- From the moment children visit the school for the first time, a sense of nurturing and care is evident. This is a view strongly shared by new prospective parents, one of whom commented, 'The school goes out of its way to help the children settle, they are so kind and so understanding.'
- Pupils show high levels of respect and care for one another. They trust the adults who care for them and say that they would have no hesitation in confiding in them if they were worried.
- Pupils have a deep sense of responsibility, reflected both in the school's strong Christian ethos and in its values. They take roles such as school councillors very seriously as a way of contributing to the development of their school. They understand that society is made up of different types of people, all of whom have something to offer. Pupils learn useful skills and habits, such as resilience and tolerance, enabling them to be responsible citizens.
- Pupils feel very safe at school, and the vast majority of parents agree. Pupils have an excellent understanding of how to stay safe on the internet; they receive regular lessons on how to do so and are confident when using technology. They could articulate why you should not give out personal information and why it is important to keep passwords safe and change them regularly. They know that eating a balanced diet, drinking water, taking regular exercise and working hard will help them to keep healthy, both mentally and physically.
- Some parents were concerned about bullying. Pupils say that occurrences of bullying are rare but that, if they do occur, staff act swiftly and effectively to find a resolution.

**Behaviour**

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding. Pupils are welcoming and polite and have impeccable manners. Visitors cannot fail to be impressed with the warmth of welcome received and the calm and purposeful atmosphere in the school.
- Behaviour has not always been as pupils experience it today. Over time, the school, working closely with parents and pupils, has brought about a significant cultural change where pupils' behaviour has become an outstanding feature of St Nicholas Church of England Primary Academy.
- Pupils know exactly what is expected of them and one another. They strive to do everything they can to learn well and treat one another with respect and tolerance. Pupils understand that if they misbehave it will have a negative impact on their learning. Not only that, but it will also have a negative impact on the learning of their

friends. Pupils' behaviour throughout the inspection, whether in class, moving around the building or when playing at break or lunchtime, was never less than excellent.

- Parents who spoke to inspectors expressed, without exception, how much they think behaviour has improved and how this is helping their children learn more effectively.
- Attendance is continually improving and is efficiently monitored by the school's attendance officer. This reflects pupils' high levels of enjoyment in their learning and their excellent attitudes to their work in class.

## Outcomes for pupils

**Good**

- In 2018, the outcomes pupils achieved in reading writing and mathematics were below those achieved nationally. Pupils' progress in reading and mathematics was below average. Current progress across the school in reading, writing and mathematics is improving, reflecting the stronger teaching that is now in place. Outcomes across the school are improving, with pupils making consistently good progress
- The proportion of children gaining a good level of development in Reception has risen steadily over the last three years. The percentage of children reaching the expected standard in the current Reception class is on track to be higher than the national average. This reflects good progress from their typically low starting points.
- The majority of pupils reach the required standard in the Year 1 phonics screening check. Evidence in books indicates that current pupils are likely to achieve higher results in phonics than those currently being achieved nationally.
- Pupils successfully build upon the good start they make in early years. Assessment information, supported by the work seen in pupils' books, illustrates that the outcomes pupils are achieving by the end of Year 2 are continuing to improve. Progress in reading, writing and mathematics is good, reflecting the good teaching that pupils receive.
- Disadvantaged pupils, and those with SEND, make good progress and achieve in line with other pupils in the school. There is a wide array of targeted support to help them catch up if they fall behind. This reflects the effective use of pupil premium funding.
- The provision for the most able pupils is improving, as evidenced by the increasing proportions of pupils reaching the higher standards, and by work seen in pupils' books. However, the proportions of pupils who are gaining higher levels in mathematics by the end of Year 6 are below those achieving the higher levels in reading and writing. Leaders correctly identify this as an area to improve and are taking appropriate steps to do so.
- Pupils are making similarly good progress in the broad range of subjects across the curriculum. Leaders are in the process of exploring ways to provide pupils with greater opportunities to use their English and mathematical skills more widely across the curriculum, to enhance learning.

## Early years provision

**Good**

- The same focus on pupils' personal development and well-being that exists in the rest of the school is easy to see in the early years setting. Arrangements for the induction of children are very good and are greatly appreciated by parents.

- As a result of strong transition arrangements, children are confident when coming into school for the first time. Parents appreciate this and the very nurturing environment provided. One parent commented: 'My child was so confident when she started. She just loves coming to school and that has stayed with her throughout the year.'
- From starting points that are typically low for their age, particularly in language and communication, children make good progress as a result of a well-resourced environment, the dedicated care and attention from adults, and good teaching.
- Planning is comprehensive, with input from all those who work in the Reception classes. There is a clear emphasis on the development of language to compensate for some children's limited communication skills.
- Activities are well thought out, with purposeful activities which help children make links in their learning. In one lesson focusing on the book 'The Very Hungry Caterpillar', a group of children rewrote the story with their teacher, focusing on vocabulary; another group made a caterpillar out of paper, developing their fine motor skills, while a mathematics group matched the numbers of fruits eaten each day to number digits. As a result, children could tell inspectors what they were learning and why.
- There is a good balance between teacher-led activities, and those where children have the opportunity to choose for themselves. There are instances, when children are working more independently, when adults miss opportunities to develop and reinforce children's learning.
- Children are well behaved, have good attitudes to their learning, and benefit from highly structured routines that help them to become confident, safe and secure. They play together nicely and do so with increasing levels of concentration and enjoyment.
- Early years is well led and managed, with a cohesive approach across classes. Reception children mix confidently with older pupils when learning phonics, enabling all children, including the most able, to make as much progress as possible.
- The environment meets the needs of the children well. Resources are readily accessible, and children were able to explain to inspectors all the different areas they can use in their learning, including their much-loved 'reading den'.
- The setting is safe and secure. Adults are well trained in all aspects of child protection, and welfare requirements are fully met.



## School details

Unique reference number	142814
Local authority	Kent
Inspection number	10088105

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	348
Appropriate authority	Governing body
Chair	Brian Sullivan
Headteacher	Christopher Dale
Telephone number	01797 361 906
Website	<a href="http://www.st-nicholas-newromney.kent.sch.uk">www.st-nicholas-newromney.kent.sch.uk</a>
Email address	<a href="mailto:office@st-nicholas-newromney.kent.sch.uk">office@st-nicholas-newromney.kent.sch.uk</a>
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

## Information about this school

- The school joined the Aquila, Diocese of Canterbury Academies Trust on 1 June 2016, as a sponsored academy.
- The school is slightly larger than the average-sized primary school.
- The vast majority of pupils are White British.
- The proportion of pupils who attract the pupil premium is higher than the national average.
- The proportion of pupils with SEND is average. There is a small number of pupils with education, health and care plans.
- A new local governing body was constituted in January 2019, having taken over from an interim board appointed by the academy trust. Three members of the interim board are now governors.
- The school was inspected by SIAMS (Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist

Schools) in July 2018, when it was judged to be good with outstanding leadership and management.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors visited lessons in all year groups to observe pupils' learning. In some lessons they were accompanied by senior leaders.
- Discussions were held with senior leaders, members of the new governing body, staff, pupils, representatives of the trust and representatives from the parent council.
- Inspectors examined a wide range of documentation, including that related to: safeguarding; pupils' attendance and behaviour; school improvement planning; the school's own assessment information; the monitoring of teaching; minutes of the governing body's meetings; and policies.
- Inspectors spoke to pupils informally during the day and observed them during playtime and lunchtime.
- Inspectors listened to pupils from Year 6 read and met formally with a group of pupils to discuss their learning, behaviour and safety. They looked at pupils' books, displays of pupils' work and the school's assessments of the progress made by pupils.
- Inspectors considered the views of parents by meeting with parents at the beginning of the inspection, meeting the parent council, and by taking account of 31 responses to the online questionnaire, Parent View, including 17 free-text comments.
- Inspectors also took account of 25 responses to Ofsted's staff survey and 16 responses to the pupil survey.

## Inspection team

Bill James, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Simon Yates	Ofsted Inspector
Ross Macdonald	Ofsted Inspector

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