

Ermine Street Church Academy

2 Swynford Road, Alconbury Weald PE28 4XG

Inspection dates

22 to 23 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	Not previously inspected

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- Leaders have successfully established Ermine Street Church Academy as an inclusive and happy school. It is well-ordered, with a calm and purposeful atmosphere.
- The headteacher leads the developments in this growing school effectively. He is strongly supported by senior and middle leaders.
- Leaders and governors share a clear vision and determination to promote pupils' personal development. They are equally committed to ensuring that pupils achieve highly.
- Attainment in reading, writing and mathematics is not as high as leaders aspire to, particularly the proportion of pupils attaining the higher standards. Nonetheless, pupils' progress is improving strongly across the school. Most pupils make good or better progress in these subjects from their starting points when they joined the school.
- Governors and the trust support and challenge school leaders to make improvements. They visit the school regularly to check for themselves how well the school is improving.
- Staff, parents and pupils share a strong belief in the values of their school and speak highly of the work staff do. Parents appreciate the nurturing environment in which their children feel safe and learn effectively.
- The curriculum is broad and balanced. It is enhanced by a wide range of trips, clubs and other memorable learning experiences.
- Pupils' behaviour is good in lessons and around the school. Warm and trusting relationships underpin their enjoyment of learning. The high number of pupils who join the school throughout the year settle in quickly.
- Children make a positive start in the early years. Staff provide a stimulating learning environment and ensure that children develop good learning behaviours.
- Leaders for subjects other than English and mathematics are new to their roles. As such, the processes for checking the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement across the wider curriculum are not established.
- Teachers plan lessons that engage most pupils' interests and build on their previous learning effectively. However, pupils do not have enough opportunities to make choices in their learning and apply their knowledge and skills independently. As a result, not enough pupils reach the higher standards of which they are capable.
- Some pupils' books are untidy. This is because not all teachers are consistent in their expectations of the presentation of pupils' work.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Build on the capacity and effectiveness of leadership and governance by developing the skills of new subject leaders so that they can improve the quality of teaching and raise standards in their areas of responsibility.
- Improve the quality of teaching and learning and raise standards further by:
 - ensuring that pupils have more opportunities to make choices and deepen their learning so that more pupils achieve the higher standards across subjects
 - ensuring that teachers' expectations for the presentation of pupils' work are consistently high across the school.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- Ermine Street Church Academy is a welcoming and friendly school where staff morale is high, and pupils are happy and hard-working.
- Developments since the opening of the school in September 2016 have been rapid. The headteacher's strong leadership has been the driving force in meeting the changing needs of this growing school. Ably supported by senior leaders, governors and the trust, the headteacher has managed the pace of change effectively and created a welcoming and harmonious community.
- Leaders' vision for pupils and everyone in the school community to 'Explore, Discover, Learn' is shared and understood by leaders, governors and staff alike. The school's positive ethos and values, such as respecting everyone, taking responsibility and serving others, are embedded in all areas of school life. There are good relationships between staff and pupils, who show care towards each other and for their school.
- Senior leaders and governors have a secure understanding of the school's strengths and areas needing further improvement. They have identified accurately the next steps required to make the school even better and have clear plans in place that focus on the right priorities.
- A particular challenge for leaders is the very high number of pupils who join the school other than at the usual times. Only five percent of the current pupils started at the school when it opened in September 2016. Pupils benefit from the strong support and nurture that the school provides. This ensures that pupils settle quickly and are ready to learn.
- Currently, most pupils make good progress in reading, writing and mathematics from their different, and sometimes low, starting points. However, leaders are determined to improve outcomes further and increase the proportion of pupils who reach the higher standards in reading, writing and mathematics throughout the school.
- The English and mathematics leaders have received effective training and coaching from senior leaders and the trust. As a result, they are confident and have a good understanding of their subjects. They share senior leaders' commitment to make teaching and the curriculum as effective as possible.
- Pupils enjoy a broad and balanced curriculum that enables a range of subjects to be studied in meaningful and relevant contexts. For example, during the inspection, pupils in the mixed Year 3 and Year 4 class were preparing questions to maximise the information they could gather about the Anglo Saxons during their visit to West Stow the following day. Pupils were exploring aspects of geography and history in an interesting and cohesive manner. Visits to other places of interest, close links with the local churches and community and a wide range of after-school clubs add further enhancement to pupils' learning experiences at the school.
- The curriculum also contributes well to pupils' behaviour and well-being. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is well supported through carefully planned assemblies and lessons. Pupils learn to respect each other and celebrate

differences through a range of activities that teach them about people in the wider world. Pupils understand the school's values and fundamental British values, both of which are successfully woven through the curriculum. Staff teach pupils how to apply principles such as empathy and equality into their everyday lives. This prepares pupils very well for both the next stage of their education and their happy and successful development outside of school.

- The additional funding for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) is used effectively. The experienced special educational needs coordinator (SENCo) ensures that carefully focused support is put in place to meet these pupils' needs. The impact of this support is carefully monitored to ensure that it is effective, and, consequently, pupils with SEND make good progress.
- Leaders and governors monitor how they spend the pupil premium funding and evaluate the impact of their spending decisions rigorously. They place a strong focus on ensuring that disadvantaged pupils make the progress required to achieve as well as other pupils nationally. Staff identify any barriers to learning and increasingly provide appropriate academic and well-being support. The school's recently appointed family worker works closely with disadvantaged pupils and their families. The impact of her effective support can already be seen in the improving achievement and attendance of disadvantaged pupils.
- The primary physical education (PE) and sport premium funding is used well to enable sports coaches to develop teachers' expertise and pupils' skills across a wide range of sports. The funding has also been used to provide increased opportunities for pupils to participate in competitive, inter-school sports activities. Pupils have access to a variety of after-school clubs, such as football, netball, gymnastics, hockey, multi-sports and dodge ball. Pupils say that they enjoy the range of activities on offer.
- Leaders have a good understanding of the quality of education provided by the school. They regularly check the quality of teaching and learning in lessons to identify and spread good practice throughout the school, particularly in reading, writing and mathematics. Although there are many strengths in the wider curriculum, leadership of other subjects is not fully in place. New subject leaders for science, history and geography are keen to begin their roles in September 2019. Senior leaders have plans to support and develop these leaders, so they have the opportunity to increase their leadership skills and confidence quickly.
- Parents are extremely supportive of the school. Almost all parents who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, would recommend the school to other parents. They consider that the school is led effectively, and their children are nurtured and taught well. Parents appreciate the way leaders regularly seek their views, for example regarding home learning. One parent, summing up the views of many commented: 'The headteacher and staff at this school are excellent; deeply committed and determined to make a success of each child's time at Ermine Street Academy.'
- The trust provides regular and effective support for leaders and governors. This has helped leaders to develop the new school, evaluate the school's performance accurately and to build a clear strategy to improve it further. The school works well with other schools in the trust and within the local area to support teachers' professional development and to check the accuracy of teachers' assessments.

Governance of the school

- The local governing body is committed to the school and, additionally, its members bring a range of relevant skills and experience. Governors fulfil their legal duties effectively, for example by ensuring the appropriate use of additional funding for disadvantaged pupils and checking that the school's procedures for safeguarding pupils are rigorous.
- The local governing body knows the school's strengths and its areas for improvement. This is because they ask leaders searching and challenging questions and visit the school regularly to check for themselves that there is evidence of the improvements that leaders tell them about.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- There is a strong culture of safeguarding at Ermine Street Church Academy. Leaders, staff and governors ensure that pupils are safe and happy in school by applying their agreed approach: 'If you question something, then do something.'
- Safer recruitment and vetting procedures are thorough. Appropriate checks are made on all adults who work in the school, including volunteers.
- Staff receive regular safeguarding training and updates. They fully understand their roles in relation to child protection. They talk confidently about the school's procedures for passing on any child protection concerns to the designated safeguarding leaders.
- Leaders have ensured that there is appropriate support for vulnerable pupils and their families. The staff who support these pupils, including the family worker, are particularly effective. This is because they know the pupils and their families well. They offer good support for pupils' well-being and encourage regular and prompt attendance.
- Parents recognise and appreciate that the school places a high priority on maintaining pupils' safety and care.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Staff establish positive relationships with pupils and know them well. Teachers have increasingly high expectations for pupils to achieve as well as they can. In the mixed-age classes, teachers use their strong subject knowledge and detailed assessment of pupils' prior learning to plan effectively to meet pupils' needs.
- Teachers give clear explanations and model what they expect from pupils. For example, following support from the teacher, a group of Year 1 pupils were able to use practical resources to represent 2-digit numbers as 'tens and ones' in mathematics. In a mixed Year 5 and Year 6 English lesson, the teacher explained clearly how to use synonyms and adverbial phrases to describe a character from a text. Pupils worked diligently in pairs, sharing ideas and supporting each other. Later observations of the pupils' work showed how they had successfully improved their writing as a result of the

teacher's precise guidance.

- Teachers use a range of resources well to enhance their teaching. They encourage pupils to use information on display around the classroom, practical resources, technology, dictionaries and thesauruses to support their learning.
- Teaching assistants are well-trained and skilled. They work effectively with small groups and individual pupils who are vulnerable, pupils with SEND and those who have recently joined the school. As a result, pupils are able to access their learning and make good progress from their various starting points.
- Reading has a high profile in the school. Phonics is taught consistently, and most pupils make strong progress. Lessons include frequent opportunities to develop pupils' reading skills. In every classroom, attractive book corners and reward charts recording the number of books pupils have read develop a love of reading. Pupils have access to high-quality texts and excitedly told the inspector that the Friends of Ermine Street Church Academy have recently purchased additional books for the school library.
- Pupils' achievements in writing are improving. Teachers help pupils to extend their vocabulary and use relevant technical language. Lessons focus on how pupils can construct different sentences and improve their spellings and punctuation. Most pupils enjoy writing and, consequently, write well.
- The quality of mathematics teaching is good. Teachers make sure that pupils have opportunities to explain their ideas, use their skills to solve problems and develop their reasoning. This approach helps pupils to master fundamental skills and vocabulary quickly.
- Pupils say they enjoy learning across all subjects. The work in pupils' books shows that most make good gains in their learning in a range of subjects, such as science, history and geography. Subject leaders are currently developing an assessment approach for subjects other than English and mathematics. This is to enable them to check pupils' progress rigorously to ensure they know that pupils achieve well and are challenged across all subjects.
- Work is mostly well suited to pupils' needs and supports their good progress. However, in some lessons, pupils are not provided with sufficiently challenging work. This is because the work is either not demanding enough, or not open-ended enough to enable pupils to think for themselves. Pupils have limited opportunities to make choices and, therefore, develop confidence in their ability to work independently. This means that they do not routinely develop and extend their learning to attain the higher standards across subjects.
- Teachers' expectations for the presentation of pupils' work are not consistently high across the school. On occasions, pupils do not take enough care when completing their tasks, and some work in pupils' books is rushed and untidy.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils live up to the school's positive ethos and values. They are proud to be part of Ermine Street Church Academy, which they describe as having a 'caring atmosphere' and being a place where they are encouraged to 'try different things and have a go'.
- The school has a strong ethos. Pupils are taught the importance of living a moral life, and they understand the difference between right and wrong. The work by leaders and staff to develop pupils as thoughtful, responsible citizens of the wider world is having a positive impact.
- Pupils enjoy school. They like their teachers and want to please them. As one pupil stated, 'The teachers are kind. They think we are all unique and special.' Pupils are generally confident learners who are a credit to themselves, their teachers and the school.
- Pupils undertake a range of responsibilities and contribute to decision-making. For example, the elected 'Ermine Street Envoys' have reviewed the organisation of lunchtime to make sure that the established routines support pupils' behaviour.
- Through a well-planned programme of personal, social and health education, (PSHE) pupils develop a good understanding of how to stay safe in a variety of situations, including when using the internet.
- Pupils know about bullying and what to do if they see or experience it. Pupils say bullying is rare and they are confident that their teachers will sort out any incidents quickly.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Good behaviour is evident throughout the school, due to the consistent implementation of the school's behaviour policy. Pupils show consideration for one another as they move around the school and at playtimes. In the dining hall, they are well-mannered and sociable. The before and after school 'Hangar club' is well-run and provides a variety of safe and enjoyable activities for pupils to participate in.
- Pupils often display a helpful attitude towards each other. For example, a group of Year 6 pupils have organised a lunchtime reading club. Older pupils help to serve the younger pupils' lunches and lead games with them at breaktimes.
- Leaders analyse the number and nature of behavioural issues and are active in putting appropriate support in place to improve behaviour. Consequently, the number of recorded incidents of poor behaviour are low. Some parents commented that their children's behaviour has improved since joining the school, because of leaders' high

expectations and consistent approaches.

- Pupils want to come to school, and overall attendance is above the national average. Staff work closely with families and provide support to alleviate any issues affecting the attendance of individual pupils.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- This new school has limited historic published assessment information for the end of key stage 1 and key stage 2. Additionally, the small numbers of pupils in each year group and the high proportion of pupils who join the school throughout the year mean the school's published assessment information for 2017 and 2018 is varied, and this needs to be taken into consideration. During the inspection, observations of teaching and learning, and careful examination of pupils' work in books over time, demonstrate that throughout the school, and within each key stage, most pupils make consistently good progress in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Many pupils start at the school at different points during the school year. Some pupils have faced challenging circumstances in their previous schools or have experience of different education systems. Leaders ensure that all these pupils receive appropriate support. Detailed assessments of each pupil take place soon after they start at the school, and staff liaise closely with parents and other professionals where necessary. The school's records show that these pupils settle in well and often make strong progress in their learning.
- In 2018, the proportion of pupils achieving the expected standard in the Year 1 phonics check was in line with the national average because of good teaching of phonics. Younger pupils learn to use phonics confidently to help them learn to read and spell new words. Pupils generally read widely, with fluency and comprehension that are appropriate to their age. Pupils understand the importance of learning to read. One pupil told the inspector that, 'Reading helps you learn more vocabulary and discover new things.' Another stated, 'Reading helps me when I feel stressed and takes me to another world.'
- Pupils with SEND receive effective and timely support. The good management of this provision ensures that teachers and teaching assistants plan and provide the right programmes and extra teaching for individuals. As a result, these pupils make strong progress from their various starting points.
- The achievement of disadvantaged pupils is positive and improving. Leaders have made more precise and effective use of the additional funding for these pupils. As a result, the difference in attainment between these pupils and other pupils nationally is diminishing.
- Pupils have many opportunities to practise literacy and mathematical skills through their topic work. Pupils' work on display and in their books shows that most groups are making good progress in a wide range of subjects, including science, history, geography and art. However, new leaders for subjects other than English and mathematics do not monitor or evaluate pupils' achievement in all subjects to be able to identify and address any underachievement.

- There have been improvements in outcomes since the school opened. However, in 2017 no pupils reached greater depth in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of key stage 1. In 2018, the proportions were still low. In 2018, at the end of key stage 2, only a small proportion of pupils reached the higher standards in reading, although a greater proportion reached the higher standards in mathematics. No pupils reached greater depth in writing. Leaders' actions to address this are beginning to take effect. Nonetheless, the middle- and higher-attaining pupils are not routinely given open-ended tasks that challenge them sufficiently. As a result, these pupils do not always achieve the higher standards they should.

Early years provision

Good

- Children join the early years with knowledge and skills that are broadly typical for their age. Through good provision in the Reception class, the proportion of children achieving a good level of development has been above the national average since the school opened. Consequently, most children are well prepared for moving to Year 1.
- Provision in the early years is well led and managed. The experienced early years leader, who is also the deputy headteacher, has a good understanding of the strengths and areas for development.
- Since the school opened, staff have enhanced the outdoor area to enable children to make their own choices and develop their independence. Carefully thought out learning areas both inside and outdoors provide plenty of opportunities for children to play, explore, make decisions, discover and use their imagination. Whether designing a waterfall using wooden blocks, setting up a market stall to sell vegetables, writing about a hatched butterfly or using tape measures to track how far toy butterflies have 'flown', children make good use of the skills they have learned.
- Staff form positive relationships with children. This ensures that children quickly settle into school life and learn the school's rules and routines. During their time in early years, children develop good attitudes to learning. They listen carefully to adults and other children during group activities. They also show good levels of concentration when working with their friends or when choosing from the broad range of activities available each day.
- The teaching of phonics is effective. Teachers model the links between letters and sounds well and encourage children to learn these. Children use their knowledge to read simple words and form sentences when writing.
- Adults make regular observations of children's progress and tailor future activities to each child's next steps in learning. They record each child's development clearly and share the information with parents. Parents are positive about the early years provision, and leaders provide a range of events to encourage parents to understand how they can support their children's learning at home.
- Safeguarding is equally effective in early years as it is throughout the rest of the school. Staff show great care for the children in their charge.

School details

Unique reference number	141949
Local authority	Cambridgeshire
Inspection number	10087463

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

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	111
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair	Peter Maxwell
Headteacher	Adrian Shepherd
Telephone number	01480 276 510
Website	www.erminestreetca.org.uk
Email address	businessmanager@erminestreetca.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- Ermine Street Church Academy opened in September 2016, and this is its first inspection. Since then, pupil and staff numbers have been growing. The school is currently smaller than the average-sized primary school, although its capacity is larger. During this transitional time, the number of pupils joining the school at different times is high across all year groups. Pupils come from a diverse range of educational experiences and backgrounds.
- The school is sponsored by the Diocese of Ely Multi-Academy Trust (DEMAT). The trust delegates aspects of governance to the local governing body. The board of trustees is the accountable body.
- As a school designated as having a religious character, it was subject to a separate section 48 inspection of its denominational religious education, school ethos and

content of collective worship in February 2019.

- The proportion of pupils eligible for support through the government's pupil premium funding is below the national average. More than half of the school's eligible pupils are service children who live at the nearby American military base.
- The proportion of pupils with SEND is above the national average. The proportion who have an education, health and care plan is in line with the national average.
- The headteacher and deputy headteacher have been in post since the school opened.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector, together with the headteacher or deputy headteacher, visited all classrooms to observe teaching, pupils' learning and behaviour.
- A wide range of pupils' workbooks were examined by the inspector throughout the inspection.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, the deputy headteacher, leaders for English and mathematics, the SENCo, the early years leader, who is also the deputy headteacher, and the Hangar club manager.
- The inspector met with three governors, including the chair of the governing body. In addition, the inspector met with the trust's school effectiveness officer to discuss their work with the school.
- The inspector spoke to pupils informally in class, and around the school at breaktimes and lunchtimes, to seek their views about the school. A meeting was also held with a group of pupils more formally to discuss their learning and many aspects of school life. The inspector attended a whole-school assembly.
- Some pupils were heard reading their books. The inspector also talked to pupils about their reading habits and looked at their reading records.
- The school's website was scrutinised and a range of school documents, including: assessment information; minutes from the governing body meetings; the school's own evaluation; improvement plans; and records about safeguarding and attendance.
- The inspector considered the 37 responses made by parents to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire and the 36 responses to the Ofsted free-text system. The inspector also spoke to some parents at the start of the school day. Additionally, the inspector took account of the 16 responses to Ofsted's online staff survey and the school's recent pupils' survey.

Inspection team

Fiona Webb, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

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