

Woodham Walter Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School

The Street, Woodham Walter, Maldon, Essex CM9 6RF

Inspection dates

12–13 June 2019

Overall effectiveness	Good
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Outstanding
Outcomes for pupils	Good
Early years provision	Outstanding
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- As a result of good leadership, the school has made significant improvements since its previous inspection. This is evident in the clear three-year upward trend in key stage 2 results.
- The headteacher leads the school with passion and the determination to provide a well-rounded education for all. Strong values underpin the education pupils receive.
- Governors are very knowledgeable about the school. They support school leaders and challenge them to do better in equal measure.
- Most pupils, including disadvantaged pupils and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), make good progress in their learning because they are taught and supported well.
- Reading is particularly strong across the school because the school has a well-structured approach to teaching phonics and ensuring that pupils read increasingly challenging books.
- Children in early years benefit from a rich and vibrant environment and skilled teaching. They are very well prepared for Year 1.
- Teaching assistants are well trained and make a strong contribution to pupils' learning.
- Teachers have high expectations of pupils, and usually set work that provides a good level of challenge and makes pupils think more deeply.
- Occasionally, work is a little hard for pupils because complex ideas have not been broken down enough for pupils to understand easily.
- The school takes very good care of pupils while also teaching them how to look after themselves and to keep safe.
- Pupils have a strong understanding of their own learning. They are independent and resilient. Pupils are exceptionally well prepared for their next stage of education.
- A broad curriculum is enriched through, for example, outdoor learning, extra-curricular clubs, and science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) work. Many subjects are planned well, including English, mathematics and physical education (PE). However, the depth of the curriculum is not consistently well developed in all subjects.
- School leaders are working well in partnership with other schools locally, including to develop the curriculum further and ensure that learning is well sequenced across all subjects.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise standards further across all subjects, deepen pupils' learning and ensure that the most able are extended enough, by:
 - ensuring that subject content is well sequenced in subjects such as geography, history and science to enable pupils to develop progressively deeper understanding
 - building on the work in STEM to embed the use of literacy and numeracy further across the curriculum
 - developing a manageable system of assessment in subjects other than English and mathematics (foundation subjects).
- Further refine the quality of teaching to make it even stronger, by:
 - ensuring that teachers always make sure that more difficult ideas are broken down enough for pupils to understand
 - consistently providing activities in all subjects that stretch and challenge pupils' thinking, especially for the most able.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- The headteacher provides strong leadership that is very successfully underpinned by a carefully considered set of shared values. She promotes, with relentless drive, a vision for education that encompasses the academic, personal, social and emotional development of each pupil. Pupils thrive as a result and develop into well-rounded, confident pupils ready for future life.
- The headteacher and governors have been determined to improve the school since its previous inspection. They have worked systematically to address the areas for improvement that were identified and establish a good quality of education across the school. Effective support from the local authority has helped the school on its journey of improvement.
- Senior leaders support the headteacher well and provide good leadership in their own right. The headteacher delegates well and has developed the skills of her leadership team effectively since the school's previous inspection.
- Many subject leaders are leading their areas well, although some foundation subject leader roles are still developing. Leadership of English, mathematics and PE is particularly effective in establishing a coherent curriculum and ensuring that staff have the skills they need to teach these subjects well.
- Leaders monitor the work of the school, including teaching and learning, well. Hence, they have an accurate and precise understanding of its strengths and weaknesses.
- Provision and support are good for specific groups of pupils, such as those with SEND or disadvantaged pupils, and enable these pupils to make strong progress.
- Pupils' progress is monitored well. The school is particularly good at identifying gaps in learning in English and mathematics and providing additional support to individual pupils to ensure that they do not fall behind.
- Leaders have engaged well with staff and governors in discussing the current curriculum and their vision for its further development. A broad range of subjects is taught, and pupils cover what they need to. However, coverage lacks the depth in some foundation subjects, such as geography, history and science, that is evident in English, mathematics and PE.
- School leaders are conscious of the need to sequence learning in a more progressive manner, and to provide more opportunities for high achievement through the application of the knowledge that pupils are acquiring.
- The curriculum is effectively enriched by the work on outdoor learning where all pupils have opportunities to go on forest trails, explore the flora and fauna in the forest and develop a wide range of practical skills. STEM days enable pupils to link science, technology and mathematical ideas, as well as to explore interesting topics, such as dinosaurs or forensic science.
- A wide range of well-attended extra-curricular clubs enhances the curriculum and provides good opportunities for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

- The primary PE and sport premium funding is used exceptionally well to develop pupils' health and fitness. A wide range of sports and PE clubs is available before and after school, including clubs for karate and dance, in addition to regular PE lessons. The school has won many prizes for sports and PE, which is all the more remarkable given the small size of the school.
- The vast majority of parents and carers are extremely positive about the school and very satisfied by the quality of education it provides for their children. Most who made comments were fulsome in their praise. For example, one parent noted: 'fabulous village school – a hidden gem,' and another, 'the school feels like a family, the teachers are very thoughtful and considerate, and the children seem to learn by example.' These comments capture the warm and positive ethos of the school very well.

Governance of the school

- Governors provide strong oversight of the school's work. They work in partnership with the school to monitor the impact of policies and plans. Governors visit the school often and speak to staff and pupils to help them to get underneath the school's performance. As a result, governors have a very good understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development. They are working actively with leaders to address any shortcomings. For example, governors are very aware of the developments that are needed in the curriculum and are supporting the school in working with others locally to plan a more progressive curriculum.
- The governing body systematically checks the progress that leaders are making on the objectives in the school improvement plan. Governors readily ask questions to find out more about the school's effectiveness. Overall, governors are very effective in holding leaders to account for the school's performance.
- Governors bring a wide range of knowledge and skills from their own professional backgrounds, which they use to support and advise the school. Governors undertake training to ensure they have the knowledge they need to carry out their roles effectively. They are strategic in their approach and give good consideration to the long-term future of the school.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. The school provides a positive culture of keeping pupils safe. Staff are knowledgeable about safeguarding matters and vigilant when it comes to pupils' safety.
- Effective systems are in place to ensure that any concerns about a pupil's welfare are shared and followed through, including, where necessary, with external agencies and professionals.
- The school provides training and briefings for safeguarding throughout the year, and governors are invited to participate when they can. This means that staff are kept up to date with any new issues or threats to safety that arise during the year, especially in relation to online safety. They are able to refresh their knowledge on training conducted annually at the start of the year or delve more deeply into a specific area of

safeguarding.

- Parents are kept abreast of safeguarding issues and how they can help to keep their children safe through regular features in the school's newsletter, information on the school's website and e-safety events at the school.
- The school carries out all the required pre-employment checks rigorously to ensure that any new employee, governor, contractor or volunteer is safe to be around pupils.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- The good quality of teaching enables pupils of all abilities and backgrounds to make good progress in their learning. Lively and vibrant displays across the school create a stimulating environment for learning.
- Teachers question pupils well to ensure they have understood important ideas. Questions also probe pupils' understanding to deepen it. Teachers check with pupils that they have understood relevant vocabulary and are using this in their work.
- Reading is taught well. Pupils are taught phonics effectively lower down the school, including in early years. A wide range of good-quality books is used to help widen pupils' vocabulary and develop their comprehension skills. Pupils say that teachers are quick to suggest more challenging books for them to read and encourage them to explore different genres.
- The issues raised in the last inspection about the lack of problem solving in mathematics have been rectified. Pupils are taught how to break problems down in order to solve them. They have regular opportunities in lessons to develop their skills of reasoning and to explain their mathematics. However, pupils do not have as many well-planned opportunities to explain subject-specific ideas or their thinking in subjects such as geography, history and science. This hinders their learning, especially for the most able.
- Teachers usually explain work clearly to pupils, including any new vocabulary, and provide them with useful examples to follow. Pupils say that this helps them with their learning. Worked examples and exemplars on displays in classrooms also help pupils' learning and they actively use these as references to help them complete their work.
- Teaching assistants work in close partnership with teachers and provide good support to the pupils they are working with. Teachers deploy teaching assistants thoughtfully to maximise their impact on pupils' learning.
- Sometimes, teachers do not break work down enough or ensure that it matches the needs of pupils. This makes the work more difficult for pupils to do, especially on their own. Overall, though, teachers have a good understanding of their pupils' learning and mostly pitch work at the right level of difficulty for pupils' needs.
- Pupils talk knowledgeably about their learning and have a good understanding of what they are doing well, where they have improved this year and the areas of learning they need to continue to work on. This reflects the good-quality feedback pupils receive from teachers, particularly in English and mathematics, about how well they are doing. Pupils respond well to this feedback and this is evident in the improvements in their

work.

- Homework is effective in helping pupils to consolidate learning in lessons.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Outstanding

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding.
- Pupils are happy and safe in school. They have a deep and secure understanding of how to keep themselves safe and about the work the school does to ensure they are well supported and looked after.
- Relationships between pupils and staff and among pupils are strong. Pupils feel that they have adults they can go to if they are concerned or worried about anything.
- Pupils are warm, friendly and polite. They welcome visitors to the school and any pupils who join the school part-way through their primary education are swiftly made to feel part of the school 'family'. The school creates a strong sense of belonging.
- The school promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development highly successfully. Pupils have a strong understanding of right and wrong and they are reflective and thoughtful about life's bigger questions.
- Pupils have a very good understanding of diversity and fairness. They are curious about different cultures and religions, and readily embrace diversity in family backgrounds. Pupils get on with one another exceptionally well. In lessons, they discuss work with their partner with great maturity and readily help one another.
- Pupils are very keen to learn and to do well, and this is reflected in their good attendance. Their highly positive attitudes to learning make a significant contribution to their good progress.
- The school promotes high levels of independence among pupils and they have many opportunities for taking on responsibilities, such as being a school council representative or a house captain. They become resilient and confident learners who do not demand immediate help from teachers when they come across a difficult problem but will try a number of other strategies first.
- Because of their strong personal development, including being independent, resilient and resourceful learners, pupils are exceptionally well prepared not only for secondary school but also their future lives.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding. Pupils take responsibility for their own behaviour so that staff rarely have to speak to them or admonish them for going off task.
- Lessons proceed smoothly without any distraction or disturbances because pupils cooperate with teachers and other adults exceptionally well.

- Pupils of all ages play together harmoniously at break- and lunchtimes. They treat one another with respect and older pupils readily take care of younger ones.
- On a wet lunchtime during the inspection, pupils made no fuss about having to stay in classrooms. They played board games and games on the computer happily with one another.
- Pupils are adamant that bullying is not an issue in the school, and if any such behaviour were to occur, they have full confidence in staff being able to deal with it.
- The impeccable behaviour of pupils contributes to the sense of safety that they feel when in school.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Pupils are now making consistently good progress in their learning across the school, and their progress is particularly strong in English and mathematics.
- Key stage 2 national test results have been on an upward trend for the last three years. The proportion of pupils attaining at least the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics has improved from being below average three years ago to being well above average in 2018. The average scaled scores in reading and mathematics were also high last year.
- The progress pupils make between the end of key stage 1 and key stage 2 has also improved and was well above the progress made by pupils nationally in reading and writing in 2018. It was not as strong in mathematics. However, the work in school shows that current pupils are now making equally good progress in mathematics and English.
- Key stage 1 results tend to fluctuate a little bit but, from their starting points, pupils make good progress. This was very evident when looking at pupils' work in writing and mathematics. Writing develops and extends well from the end of Reception and pupils grow more confident and fluent when working with numbers.
- The school's performance in phonics has always been strong and continues to be so. Nearly all pupils attain the expected standard in the phonics screening check at the end of Year 1. Any who do not usually do so at the end of Year 2.
- Since the previous inspection, pupils' skills of problem solving and reasoning in mathematics have improved and they are effective in explaining their methods and solutions.
- Pupils are typically able to sustain the quality of their writing and they have good opportunities to write extended pieces in their English lessons. The opportunities for writing in other subjects, such as geography, history and science, are more mixed.
- The school has introduced a new computer program to improve pupils' spelling and this is having a particularly positive impact across key stage 2. It is being used more effectively lower down the school to support younger pupils with spelling and helping them to break down words to read them correctly.
- Pupils with SEND and disadvantaged pupils are making good progress too. Across the school, a good number of disadvantaged pupils are reaching or exceeding the age-

related targets for attainment in English and/or mathematics.

- Pupils are developing their knowledge well in subjects across the curriculum such as geography, history and science. They are not, however, always developing deeper understanding or consistently applying what they have learned. This is particularly so for the most able.
- Across the school, pupils are producing thoughtful artwork and interesting models as they develop their art and design and technology skills. PE and sports work show good development of skills.

Early years provision

Outstanding

- Children usually begin Reception with skills and knowledge that are broadly in line with their ages. There are some variations from year to year and within individual cohorts. Last year, for example, most children were either low or higher attainers when they joined with few in the middle. They made strong progress, with most attaining a good level of development. The higher attainers did well in exceeding the early learning goals particularly in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Staff in Reception have created a vibrant, exciting and stimulating learning environment which captures children's interest and engages them fully in their learning.
- Children become fully engrossed in the activities provided for them. They sustain their concentration well because the activities are put together thoughtfully and are planned at the right level for their needs. They also stick well with an activity because they have been shown how to do it by adults.
- Adults question children well to help extend their language and learning. They model how to use language and vocabulary and are not afraid to introduce challenging words into the learning. For example, in a lesson on halving, the teacher encouraged children to talk about cutting a square 'diagonally' to make two halves and demonstrated this so they knew what it meant. As a result, children made use of this word in their own explanations of what they were doing.
- The rich opportunities for learning encourage children to try all activities. Boys are encouraged to write and do so because they want to, and they have something relevant to write about. They also enjoy writing words that use the phonic sounds they have been learning.
- Adults make good use of the outdoor area to encourage learning and they include children's interests in their planning of both the indoor and outdoor areas. Children also benefit immensely from working in the forest in the school's grounds.
- Children's progress is diligently assessed and any gaps in learning are identified quickly and addressed.
- The school has good links with feeder nurseries and pre-schools locally. The Reception teacher visits these settings and involves the staff in the induction for new children.
- Parents are encouraged to share any learning they do at home with their children and to listen to them reading daily.

- Children are very well looked after in the Reception class. They mix well with older children in assemblies and during break- and lunchtimes.
- Behaviour in the Reception class is excellent, and children's personal and social development is exceptionally well promoted. Children work together very well, readily helping one another and sharing resources. They speak confidently and enthusiastically about their work.

School details

Unique reference number	115123
Local authority	Essex
Inspection number	10088650

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	100
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Geoff Hicks
Headteacher	Sue Dodd
Telephone number	01245 223264
Website	www.woodhamwalter.essex.sch.uk
Email address	admin@woodhamwalter.essex.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	30 November–1 December 2016

Information about this school

- The school is much smaller in size compared with other primary schools nationally.
- The proportion of pupils supported by the pupil premium has been increasing and is now broadly in line with the national average.
- Most pupils are White British. The school has a small number of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds, including a few from the Gypsy Roma community. None speaks English as an additional language.
- The proportion of pupils with SEND is in line with the national average. A broadly average proportion have an education, health and care plan.
- The school is designated as a voluntary-controlled Church of England school. Its last section 48 inspection was in February 2017.

Information about this inspection

- The lead inspector observed learning in all classes. Most of these observations were conducted jointly with the headteacher.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, deputy headteacher, the special educational needs coordinator, and subject leaders for English and mathematics.
- The lead inspector also met with a group of five governors, including the chair and vice-chair of the governing body. She held a telephone discussion with a representative of the local authority.
- The lead inspector spoke informally to pupils in lessons and around the school, as well as holding discussions with a representative group of pupils.
- The inspection took account of 57 responses to the Ofsted online questionnaire, Parent View and written responses from 24 parents.
- Ofsted questionnaires completed by 15 members of staff and 31 pupils at the school were also considered as part of the inspection process.
- The lead inspector spoke with parents as they dropped their children off at school.
- The inspector observed the work of the school. She looked at the school's improvement plan, a range of policies and procedures, documents relating to the work of the governing body and the arrangements for ensuring that pupils are safeguarded. Documentation reviewed included records of assessment information relating to pupils' attainment and progress, behaviour and attendance. The school's website was also checked.

Inspection team

Gulshan Kayembe, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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