

Little Hallingbury Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School

Wrights Green Lane, Little Hallingbury, Bishop's Stortford, Hertfordshire CM22 7RE

Inspection dates

9–10 July 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	Outstanding
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- Leaders and governors offer a clear and ambitious vision that is shared by all staff. Together, they have brought about significant improvements since the previous inspection.
- Leaders know the school well and continue to drive improvement with energy and purpose. Effective governance provides leaders with support and challenge in equal measures.
- Subject leaders and teaching staff are provided with strong direction. They understand their roles in continuing the school's improvement.
- Published information and school records show that the achievement of most pupils has improved significantly, particularly in mathematics, which was a weaker subject in the past.
- Teaching is well planned. Teachers make strong use of assessment information to provide suitably challenging work for pupils of different abilities.
- Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are good in lessons and around the school. The school is a calm and respectful environment.
- Parents strongly support the school and acknowledge the improvement work of leaders since the previous inspection.
- The progress of disadvantaged pupils is good. Leaders use the pupil premium funding carefully in order to support them and help them to overcome barriers to learning.
- Children in the early years make excellent progress because teaching and the curriculum are outstanding.
- Attendance has improved because leaders have taken effective action to reduce the persistent non-attendance of different pupils.
- Most teachers use questioning skilfully to set challenging tasks for pupils. However, some questioning does not support pupils to think deeply enough about their learning.
- Pupils' fluency in mathematics is a strength. However, some teaching does not sufficiently develop pupils' higher reasoning skills.
- In some foundation subjects (subjects other than English and mathematics), higher-level skills are not taught as well as in other subjects.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching and learning by ensuring that:
 - teachers develop their questioning skills so that pupils are supported to complete their thinking to sufficient depth, prior to responding
 - mathematics teaching offers greater opportunities for pupils to consider the steps they take as they apply their knowledge to problems, and offer reasons for their selection of the methods they have chosen
 - across the wider curriculum, teachers plan specifically for the development of higher-order skills in the foundation subjects.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- The headteacher, assisted by her capable senior team, leads with determination and ambition. Leaders set high expectations for staff teamwork, the quality of teaching, pupils' progress, behaviour, attendance and parental relations. This vision has united the staff and parental body and the school has moved forward successfully.
- Staff are unanimous in their approval for the work of leaders to improve the school. They are proud to work there, have accepted greater accountability and willingly take on additional professional responsibilities. They also appreciate the consideration given to their well-being.
- Leaders' views of the school's performance are highly accurate and have led to successful improvements. Planning is very precise and carefully addresses any remaining areas for development, as well as setting timely and realistic targets for accomplishing the goals set.
- The quality of leaders' monitoring work is strong, especially their oversight of teaching. As a result, leaders can identify supportive actions to help improve teaching, including accurate advice to teachers and the selection of successful training. Staff feel well supported in their professional development.
- Pupils' targets are a further reflection of leaders' high expectations. Leaders have developed an accurate assessment system which allows them to monitor pupils' progress and intervene to help any who are at risk of falling behind. Consequently, pupils are making much stronger progress than in the past.
- The curriculum is well constructed and ensures full coverage of all subjects across the different year groups. Topics provide pupils with memorable experiences to engage their interest for a purpose. One strong example is the English unit devoted to the biography of Walter Tull, which has helped pupils develop a greater understanding of the role played by people of diverse backgrounds in all areas of British life. Leaders make careful use of sport, singing, art and computing to support the development of pupils' creative, technical and physical skills.
- However, despite these strengths, leaders' evaluation records also accurately demonstrate that higher-level subject skills are not as developed in some subjects as in English, mathematics and science.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is carefully planned across the curriculum and includes explicit teaching of the British values. Staff focus on pupils' development by giving them different roles and responsibilities and the impact of their work contributes to the school's celebration of citizenship.
- The leadership of provision for pupils with SEND is strong. Pupils are accurately identified and assessed, and parents are closely involved in the planning to support them. Expectations for their academic and personal development are high. Consequently, these pupils to make good progress towards achieving the targets in their plans.
- Leaders have a clear understanding of the barriers to learning for disadvantaged

pupils. A range of approaches support their readiness to learn. Full access is provided to the curriculum and well-targeted opportunities ensure that the disadvantaged make strong progress.

- Additional sport premium funding is used well. Leaders have successfully addressed the barriers to participation by improving the range of available activities for pupils to enjoy. As a result, pupils participate in a wide range of clubs and competitive teams and they are more proficient swimmers.
- New subject leaders make good use of their professional development and have introduced approaches to improve the quality of teaching, including accurate monitoring arrangements. However, they have not yet fully developed the teaching of the higher-level skills in some subjects.
- The local authority provides good support to assist leaders to identify and verify their improvement work. It has also provided a strong balance of support and challenge, which has ensured that the capable leadership of the school is not dependent on external support.

Governance of the school

- Governors share the same high expectations of school leaders. They provide a suitably experienced balance of challenge and support to the work of leaders.
- Working with leaders, they have reflected on their practices and developed their skills to provide higher levels of accountability. They have worked closely with the local authority to achieve this.
- Governors' oversight of leaders' work is very thorough because of their detailed knowledge of the school's priorities and the clarity by which they measure the progress of improvement.
- The governing body fulfils its legal duties for checking on the use of additional funding and safeguarding policies and procedures. They have supported leaders' development of systematic practices for behaviour, parental communication and the financial management of the school.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Leaders ensure that all staff training meets national requirements and takes account of any local factors specific to the area in which the school is situated. Staff awareness of safeguarding issues is well developed, and their understanding of procedures and systems demonstrates the strength of training. They understand how to respond and recognise when children may be at harm. Referrals are well managed and designated safeguarding leaders work efficiently to review information so that it is acted upon in a timely manner. Communication with different external agencies is effective and cases are monitored closely. Checks on the suitability of adults to work with pupils or visit the school are thorough and well maintained.
- Pupils' awareness of how to stay safe is well developed and this includes online safety.

All pupils who spoke with the inspector said that they would refer any concerns about their safety to a teacher or adult at the school.

- All parents who spoke with the inspector agreed that their children are well cared for and safe while at school.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Leaders and teachers have brought about decisive improvements to teaching since the previous inspection so that teaching is now good for all year groups.
- Teachers set demanding expectations and develop very positive learning relationships with their pupils. Pupils are encouraged to work hard, keep trying and accept mistakes as part of learning. These valuable qualities strengthen their resilience to succeed.
- Teachers have good subject knowledge and use it to help pupils link their learning so that they deepen their understanding. The work set is challenging and interesting. For example, Year 3 pupils were able to link features of Shakespearean plays to their roots in classical Roman and Greek literature.
- Teachers make careful use of assessment information to plan work that is suitably challenging for pupils of different abilities, including the most able. One good example was in a Year 2 lesson where the activities helped pupils of all abilities to produce successful character summaries from well-known folk tales, while some were challenged to identify the moral lesson of those stories.
- New knowledge is introduced well. Teachers make strong use of questioning and explanations to deepen pupils' thinking and check on understanding. They also probe pupils' answers so that they have to explain their thinking. However, in some cases, pupils are not given enough time to complete their thinking when challenging questions are asked. Consequently, their understanding is less secure, and their progress is slower than their peers.
- Teaching assistants are skilled, knowledgeable and have an accurate view of the pupils they support and the purpose of the work. As a result, they help pupils to make strong progress, especially through questioning them and clearing up any misunderstandings.
- The teaching of reading is particularly effective. Pupils learn to read for meaning and purpose and skilfully develop higher skills including deduction, inference and the analysis of plot and characters. They are also skilled in linking the author's purpose to their choice of language.
- Writing is also taught well. Pupils are increasingly skilled in different types of genre and the conventions which operate in poetry and persuasive writing compared to subjects such as science. They can use the correct grammatical structure and teaching is also expanding their vocabulary.
- Mathematics teaching has firmly improved. Pupils can use their knowledge number and calculation very fluently and they can tackle increasingly difficult problems which have a sequence involved. They are also more skilled in the use of equipment to check on their thinking. However, in some teaching, pupils are not supported to deepen their knowledge sufficiently, by reasoning. This means relatively fewer older pupils are

reaching the higher standards they are capable of.

- While effective teaching in English and mathematics frequently challenges and stretches pupils to deepen their thinking and understanding, the same does not consistently apply in some subjects such as history, geography and science.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good. One parent, commenting for many, stated: 'My child is being pushed academically and has great opportunities to try new activities, lots of sport and has always been very happy at the school.' Other parents commended the school's work to prepare their children for life and the move up to secondary school.
- Pupils help develop and follow the school's values, known as 'the secrets of success'. They include working hard, treating others as they wish to be treated and trying their best. Together with the British values curriculum, these values help prepare pupils for life in modern Britain.
- Leaders and teachers provide a wide range of opportunities for pupils to grow spiritually, morally, socially and culturally. Engaging trips are arranged to sites of religious worship and the pupils have a clear understanding of the different faiths within their country. Pupils also successfully plan and host visits from church leaders, members of Parliament and other representatives of civil society, in order to learn of their work.
- Pupils willingly take responsibilities to serve their school and each other. Older pupils act as play leaders to support younger pupils at break and lunchtimes. Pupils also serve as sports leaders, class representatives and have contributed to the development of the school's values and charity campaigns.
- Pupils demonstrate positive respect for one another and adults at the school. This extends to their respect for people who are different to them in faith, ethnicity or ability.
- Pupils appreciate the importance of caring relationships and understand the meaning of bullying, along with the different forms it can take. They told the inspector that bullying was rare and that when it was reported, adults deal with any incidents quickly and well. The school's accurate records demonstrate that this is correct.
- Pupils feel safe at school and in different situations. They are confident there are adults who will help them if they report a concern. Pupils have a secure understanding of how to keep themselves safe when using the internet and electronic communications.
- The school promotes healthy lifestyles very well, especially through its active sports curriculum and science. Pupils enjoy physical activity, swimming and competitive sports and participate in far greater numbers than at the time of the previous inspection.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Pupils are polite, proudly wear their uniform and show good manners towards one another, visitors and adults employed at the school.
- Leaders, governors and all staff support and promote the behaviour policy and school values in a consistent manner. As a result, behaviour is good across the school and pupils understand what is expected.
- Pupils demonstrate good attitudes towards learning. They apply themselves well to lesson activities and willingly accept challenging work. Pupils show genuine curiosity during lessons and frequently frame questions of their own. During discussions, they are prepared to disagree courteously with one another and their teachers.
- Pupils' conduct around school is also good. They behave well in assembly and enjoy active games and play at lunchtime and during breaks. Their behaviour is responsible and sensible during these sessions.
- Pupils look after the school environment very well. They respect facilities, buildings, equipment and do not drop litter.
- Pupils' attendance is similar to the national average but in the previous school year the number of pupils who were persistent non-attenders increased. Leaders have responded quickly by working precisely with individual families to improve attendance. As a result, those pupils whose attendance was low in the past is quickly improving, while the total number of pupils who frequently missed school has fallen sharply.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- There has been a significant improvement in pupils' progress since the previous inspection. The progress of those currently attending the school is good and standards are rising, particularly in reading, writing and mathematics in key stage 2.
- Standards in Year 6 and Year 2 in 2018 and 2019 have risen sharply compared to past results, especially in mathematics. Pupils' work, observations of learning and the school's accurate assessment records show similar improvements in the other year groups of the school.
- While pupils' mathematical knowledge and fluency is good, work evidence and assessment information show that small numbers of the most able pupils and others who started Year 3 with average attainment in key stage 2 are not making the very best progress of which they are capable. This is because some teaching does not develop their reasoning skills sufficiently.
- Current Year 6 and Year 5 pupils have made significant progress since the previous inspection, when their learning was a cause for concern, especially in mathematics. Listening to readers and observing teaching shows that those pupils whose reading development was low in key stage 1 have been given strong support to improve in key stage 2.
- Children in the early years make exceptional progress. From starting points which are broadly typical for their age, the vast majority reach a good level of development. Since the previous inspection, the numbers of children who exceed the early learning goals in literacy, numeracy and communication have risen markedly. They are very well

prepared for entry into key stage 1.

- The proportion of Year 1 pupils achieving the expected standard in the phonics screening check has increased. Every pupil achieved the expected standard in 2018 and the vast majority are making strong progress in 2019. Visits to phonics lessons and the school's assessment records demonstrate that there are no significant gaps between the progress of different groups of pupils.
- The most able pupils are making good progress in the different year groups and more older pupils are increasingly reaching higher than age-related standards in reading, writing and mathematics. Previous differences between literacy and mathematics have been reduced owing to improvements in the teaching of core skills.
- Pupils with SEND are also making good progress from their many different starting points. They are accurately identified and assessed at early points in their education and receive personalised teaching support and care. As a result, they are able to learn well and make secure gains in knowledge.
- The progress of disadvantaged pupils currently in the school is good. Compared to previous years, the progress of those with average or higher academic starting points is strong. Consequently, the differences between their attainment and that of other pupils nationally are being reduced quickly.

Early years provision

Outstanding

- There has been a significant improvement in the quality of the provision since the previous inspection. Leaders have worked with great determination and early years provision is exceptional. Consequently, children make very strong progress in all areas of learning from their different starting points, including those with SEND.
- The learning environment is very well organised to support learning. Colourful and helpful visual resources help children to remember how to use their knowledge skilfully. The outdoors has undergone major improvement and the equipment and resources outside contribute to the exceptional learning seen in the classroom area.
- Arrangements for assessment are highly accurate and demonstrate that most children enter the Reception Year with skills and knowledge that are broadly typical for their age, with some who are lower. There is some variation between children's starting points in early writing, reading, communication and number. As a result of highly skilled teaching, all children in the early years are very well prepared for key stage 1.
- Work and play activities are precisely matched to different children and the quality of teaching is exceptional. One good example is the teaching of phonics, where children receive very well-planned activities according to their progress and assessment information. They become very successful early readers. Other planning is highly flexible, and records show how leaders adjust what is delivered each year, on the basis of their entry assessment, interests and abilities.
- Children's targets and assessment records demonstrate leaders' very high expectations. High-quality checks on learning ensure that any children who require additional support receive it quickly. Others are continually challenged and supported to make very strong

progress.

- All work and activities are organised to support children make significant progress, regardless of their different abilities. In one example, effective literacy teaching supported the most able children to give a full and convincing oral account of the causes and consequences of the Great Fire of London in 1666.
- The use of questioning is a significant strength. All adults skilfully assess children as they work or play and this helps them extend their knowledge or clear up any misunderstandings.
- All adults are skilled, highly motivated and work as a strong team. Teaching assistants are effective. They receive high-quality training and leaders organise their work very well. Consequently, they are able to support children to make exceptional progress.
- The quality of care is exceptional. Leaders and staff have a very precise understanding of each child and pay very close attention to keeping them safe, building their confidence and securing their personal development.
- Behaviour and safety are outstanding. Children are cooperative and act with great consideration. Staff actively develop these characteristics as part of the school's values and are very vigilant when leading play and work activities.
- Leaders and staff ensure that children make a very successful start in the early years. Children's pre-school experiences are thoroughly assessed, and parents are invited to meet with teachers to contribute to early assessments and discuss their children's interests. Prior to starting at the school, children visit several times with their parents to become familiar with staff and build their confidence.
- Parents are highly appreciative of the quality of education provided in the early years and this is a decisive improvement since the previous inspection. They are highly appreciative of the care their children receive as they settle in and the quality of teaching. Parents believe staff are very approachable and help them to be thoroughly involved in the learning of their children.

School details

Unique reference number	115182
Local authority	Essex
Inspection number	10088652

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	5 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	144
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Susannah Dutton
Headteacher/	Sonia Strickland
Telephone number	01279 723382
Website	www.lhandsmhboschools.co.uk
Email address	admin@littlehallingbury.essex.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	10–11 January 2017

Information about this school

- The school is smaller than the average-sized primary school and is part of the federation of St Mary's Hatfield Broad Oak and Little Hallingbury Church of England Primary Schools, which it joined in 2015.
- The school is designated as having a religious character and is a voluntary aided Church of England school. Its previous section 48 inspection as a religious school took place on 21 March 2017.
- Most pupils are from White British backgrounds and speak English as their first language.
- The proportion of pupils who are disadvantaged and eligible for pupil premium funding is significantly below that found nationally.
- The proportion of pupils who have an education, health and care plan is below national the average. The proportion of pupils with SEND is lower than the national average.
- The school offers a breakfast club.

Information about this inspection

- Learning was observed in all classes and year groups. Some of these observations were carried out jointly with the executive headteacher and other senior members of staff.
- Meetings were held with the executive headteacher, other senior leaders, teachers, governors and groups of pupils. The inspector also spoke with a senior adviser from the local authority. Meetings were also held informally with parents on the first day of the inspection.
- The inspector analysed and evaluated a range of documentation which included information about pupils' attendance, achievement, behaviour records, school self-evaluation, school improvement planning, safeguarding, the curriculum, school values, governance and the monitoring of teaching, learning and assessment.
- The inspector considered the views of 51 responses to the online questionnaire, Parent View, as well as 26 free-text responses. Parents' views were also informally sought at start of school over the course of the inspection. The inspector also took account of the views of 28 pupils and 17 staff who responded to their online surveys.

Inspection team

David Turner, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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