

Inspection of Ravensden CofE VA Primary School

Vicarage Close, Ravensden, Bedford, Bedfordshire MK44 2RW

Inspection dates: 29–30 October 2019

Overall effectiveness

Inadequate

The quality of education

Inadequate

Behaviour and attitudes

Good

Personal development

Good

Leadership and management

Inadequate

Early years provision

Requires improvement

Overall effectiveness at previous
inspection

Good

What is it like to attend this school?

Ravensden has changed from a lower to a full primary school. Leaders and governors have not managed this change well enough. Expectations of pupils are too low and, as a result, standards are too.

The curriculum is poorly organised, with too little emphasis on developing knowledge and skills. For example, in history, pupils enjoy learning about The Titanic or Neil Armstrong. However, their learning does not link with what they have already learned and what they will learn next.

Behaviour is generally good and there is little bullying. Relationships between pupils and staff are strong. Pupils know that staff will always help them if they have a problem or are worried about anything.

Pupils, staff, parents and carers are very positive about the school. It is a safe, happy and welcoming place. Pupils enjoy coming to school. Almost all pupils who responded to Ofsted's survey said they would recommend the school to a friend.

The headteacher has made a number of positive changes since she took over in September. It is too soon to see what difference these changes will make to the school.

What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

Leadership has been weak over time. Leaders and governors have not had a clear vision for the school's development or high enough expectations. Self-evaluation is descriptive, lacking analysis and healthy self-criticism. The school's improvement plan is not focused on the most important priorities. The school is in a much weaker position than it was at the time of the last inspection.

Governance is weak. Governors have not struck the right balance between support and challenge. This means that they have not held leaders to account well enough over time and the effectiveness of the school has fallen. Governors disagree among themselves about how good or otherwise the school is. The governing body does not have an accurate and precise understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses.

The addition of two extra year groups has not been well managed. The local authority offered a range of courses and other support to leaders and governors to help them manage the change from being a lower school to a full primary school. This school did not take up these opportunities.

Ravensden is a small school and there are few pupils in each year group. This means that it is difficult to make meaningful comparisons with national averages. However, when the first group of Year 6 pupils took the national tests in summer 2019, only about a third reached the expected standard in both English and

mathematics. This is not good enough and reflects the low expectations that have been the norm for too long. Pupils do not build up the strong body of knowledge and skills that they should do by the time they leave the school.

The school's curriculum is poorly designed. Too little thought has been given to what should be taught, when it should be taught and why. As a result, the curriculum is simply an amalgam of topics that look interesting and of tasks that might be fun. Leaders and staff have not thought carefully enough about what they most want pupils to know and remember about each subject. There is too much emphasis on the tasks pupils do and not enough on what they are to learn.

As a result of the poorly planned curriculum, outcomes, including the work in pupils' exercise books, are not good enough. Expectations of what pupils can and should achieve are too low, including in the early years. This means that, by the time they move on to secondary school, pupils are not well enough prepared for the next stage of their education. Two thirds of pupils left Year 6 in 2019 not having reached the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics.

The early years curriculum is somewhat better developed than that in the rest of the school. For example, phonics is given an appropriately high priority and children get off to a prompt start with learning to read. However, expectations of children are not high enough in other areas of learning and too few children reach a good level of development by the end of the Reception Year. The school admits two-year-olds to the pre-school part of the early years provision. Staff understand the needs of these very young children and care for them well.

Systems and record-keeping have been haphazard and disorganised over time. For example, until very recently, records about child protection concerns, and the actions taken in response to them, were weak. The headteacher has done a great deal to improve the way that such records are kept and stored.

Pupils are polite and well mannered. They listen carefully to instructions and follow the school's rules well. Pupils attend school regularly and very few pupils are persistently absent from school. The school has a friendly and welcoming atmosphere. Pupils are taught well about values such as kindness and respect. They display these attributes in the way they behave.

In the very short time that she has been at the school, the new headteacher has made some positive changes. She has a clear vision of how she wants the school to be and her expectations are high. However, it is too soon to see what difference the changes she has made will make to improving the quality of education.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

The school has a robust safeguarding culture. Staff know pupils well and notice when something is 'not quite right'. Pupils feel comfortable talking about things that

worry them. The designated safeguarding lead has a good understanding of the role. She takes appropriate action, when necessary, to protect pupils.

The school's single central record did not meet requirements when checked at the start of the inspection. Some required information was not listed in the document. However, all the necessary checks had been done but were recorded elsewhere. The single central record met all requirements by the end of the inspection.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Leaders and governors need to take urgent action to improve the wide-ranging weaknesses in the school's curriculum. Currently, the curriculum lacks coherence and is poorly structured. Too little consideration has been given to what pupils need to learn and what they are aiming for. Progression of skills and knowledge is unclear. Decisions about the content of the school's curriculum have been based almost entirely on what looks interesting and fun.
- Leaders must raise expectations of what pupils are capable of and, in turn, improve outcomes in all subjects and throughout the school.
- Leaders and governors must ensure that school improvement processes are effective. The school needs to develop a systematic approach for evaluating its own effectiveness. This should focus on assessing what the school does well and identifying what needs to improve. The school's action plan also needs to be improved so that it is fit for purpose. It should include the features that are typical of effective plans, for example: dates and deadlines for actions; milestones to show the progress that is expected at given intervals; measurable success criteria; an identified person who is responsible for the successful completion of each action; and information about how the plan will be monitored.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use Ofsted Parent View information when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

If you're not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

In the report, 'disadvantaged pupils' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route.

School details

Unique reference number	109623
Local authority	Bedford
Inspection number	10110269
Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	2 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	100
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Alison Baggott
Headteacher	Anna Spyropoulos
Website	www.ravensdenprimary.org
Date of previous inspection	9 February 2016

Information about this school

- The headteacher joined the school in September 2019.
- The school has pre-school provision for two-year-olds.
- The school has a religious ethos. It is a Church of England school, part of the Diocese of St Albans.

Information about this inspection

We carried out this inspection under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We deemed the inspection a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

In accordance with section 44(1) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires special measures because it is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the persons responsible for leading, managing or governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school.

- We met with the headteacher and deputy headteacher, leaders responsible for individual subjects and for the early years, teachers and pupils, governors and a

representative of the local authority.

- In order to check the effectiveness of safeguarding, we checked the school's single central record of pre-appointment checks, met the school's designated safeguarding leads, spoke with staff and pupils, and checked the school's child protection records.
- We observed pupils during their breaktimes and as they moved about the school.
- We considered a range of school documents.
- We spoke to parents as they brought their children to school. We took account of 28 responses to Ofsted's pupil survey, 14 responses to the staff survey and 18 responses to Parent View. We also considered 16 free-text comments from parents.
- We looked in depth at the following subjects: reading, mathematics and science. We met with the leaders of these subjects, visited lessons, looked at pupils' work, spoke with pupils about their work, spoke to teachers and listened to pupils read.

Inspection team

Wendy Varney, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Rachael Judd

Ofsted Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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