

Inspection of Howbridge Church of England Junior School

Howbridge Road, Witham, Essex CM8 1BZ

Inspection dates: 10–11 December 2019

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

The quality of education

Requires improvement

Behaviour and attitudes

Good

Personal development

Good

Leadership and management

Requires improvement

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection

Requires improvement

What is it like to attend this school?

Parents, pupils and staff say that the school has improved a great deal recently. Inspectors saw many signs of improvement. Nonetheless, further improvements are needed. The new leadership team has introduced training for staff to ensure that the curriculum and the quality of teaching match leaders' high expectations. Teaching, however, does not fully and consistently meet the needs of all pupils. In particular, pupils do not achieve as well as they could in reading and mathematics because teaching is not as effective as it should be.

Pupils enjoy school. Staff model the well-established school values. Pupils understand and live up to them. Inspectors saw many examples of the responsible and compassionate behaviour staff expect of pupils. In lessons, pupils try hard and have fun learning. They are keen to do well. Pupils behave sensibly and are kind towards each other during breaktimes.

Pupils told inspectors that they feel safe at school. Parents agree. Bullying is rare, and staff deal with it well so that it stops. Pupils value other people's differences. Racist and homophobic language is rare and well managed by staff.

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

The new senior leadership team know what needs to improve at the school. In September 2019, leaders started to improve the curriculum. Following recent training, new curriculum leaders are making necessary improvements. There is still more to do. In some subjects, teachers do not always teach the spelling of subject-specific words. This is because curriculum leaders have not completely clarified what teachers should teach. Most subjects now have plans that outline in a logical order what pupils will learn. In some subjects, such as history and geography, teachers do not know well enough when to revisit what pupils know and can do. As a result, pupils do not always remember what they have learned.

Curriculum leaders do not check the quality of teachers' work with enough precision. Consequently, they do not always act swiftly enough when problems arise.

Leaders are improving the teaching of reading. Pupils very much enjoy reading and understand its importance in their education. Teachers ensure that books match pupils' abilities and interests. Most pupils read well. However, teachers do not have a coherent approach to supporting pupils who find reading difficult. These pupils do not learn how to read as well as they should.

Teachers do not teach pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) consistently well. Teachers do not provide learning activities that meet their needs well enough. Extra provision outside of lessons for pupils with SEND does, however, help these pupils overcome some of the challenges they face. At times, the organisation of the extra provision interrupts lessons. This means that some pupils with SEND cannot always take part in the full curriculum.

Leaders have created an impressive curriculum for personal development. Staff contribute positively to the well-planned weekly cycle of activities that successfully link to pupils' spiritual, moral, cultural and social development. Leaders are committed to teaching pupils about healthy lifestyles. Leaders ensure that pupils have a wide range of enrichment activities, including clubs. Pupils can pursue their interests and talents during these times. Most pupils take part in an extra-curricular activity. The provision for sport is a strength of the school. Leaders are determined that all pupils take part in physical activity. In recognition of leaders' success in promoting healthy lifestyles and physical activity, the school has been awarded Active School of the Year and the Healthy Schools award.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Pupils are safe and know how to stay safe. Teachers teach pupils how to stay safe in school, outside of school and when online. Leaders provide parents with information to help them keep their children safe from harm.

Staff are well trained and look for signs of potential risks of harm. Adults respond appropriately and promptly when concerns arise. Records show that leaders work well with external agencies to help vulnerable pupils or families.

Governors and trust leaders make sure that the school carries out the necessary checks on staff who work with pupils. The record of these checks is accurate and well maintained.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Teachers do not consistently meet the needs of pupils. This leads to some pupils not learning the curriculum as well as they could and falling behind. Teachers need to provide activities that meet the needs of all pupils.
- Some pupils with SEND receive extra support that interrupts the curriculum. As a result, some of these pupils do not take part in the full curriculum to which they are entitled. Teachers need to provide what pupils with SEND need so that they can learn the entire intended curriculum.
- Teachers do not systematically revisit important knowledge and skills that pupils have already learned. This leads to pupils forgetting key elements of the curriculum. Curriculum leaders need to clarify when teachers should revisit knowledge and skills within the curriculum. Teachers need to develop their understanding of the curriculum so that they can plan opportunities for pupils to revisit what they have learned and remember more.
- Curriculum leaders have not completely clarified the key knowledge and understanding that pupils must know. Leaders must make clear to teachers what must be taught, including the meaning and correct spelling of the key words

within the curriculum.

- Curriculum leaders have started working well with curriculum teams to make improvements. Curriculum leaders have not checked the quality of teaching well enough to make timely changes. They must evaluate more precisely to find what is working well and what needs to improve. They also need to use this information to make necessary changes before pupils' learning is negatively affected.

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	140666
Local authority	Essex
Inspection number	10110207
Type of school	Junior
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	7 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	377
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Tim Rose
Headteacher	Lisa Dale
Website	www.howbridgejunior.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	7–8 June 2017

Information about this school

- The headteacher joined the school in September 2019.
- The school is part of the Diocese of Chelmsford Vine Schools Trust and has a religious character. Its previous section 48 inspection for schools of a religious character was December 2016. The report for this inspection is available on the school's website.

Information about this inspection

We carried out this inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

- We had discussions with the headteacher, members of the senior leadership team, special educational needs coordinator (SENCo) and curriculum leaders. We also had discussions with trust leaders and members of the local governing body.
- We spoke with parents, analysed 60 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, 33 text responses from parents and nine responses to the staff questionnaire.
- We spoke with teachers, including newly qualified teachers, support staff and pupils through the course of the inspection.

- We took account of a wide range of information, including the school’s website, development plans, information about pupils’ needs, leaders’ monitoring of quality of teaching and leaders’ records about pupils’ behaviour. Inspectors reviewed documentation regarding safeguarding.
- We visited lessons across the school and carried out scrutiny of pupils’ books. We started the inspection focusing on English, mathematics, history and geography. To answer questions raised on the first day of the inspection, we visited lessons in other subjects on the second day of the inspection.

Inspection team

Al Mistrano, lead inspector

Her Majesty’s Inspector

David Piercy

Ofsted Inspector

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Ofsted Inspector

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