

Inspection of Cold Harbour Church of England School

Highland Close, Bletchley, Milton Keynes, Buckinghamshire MK3 7PD

Inspection dates: 19 and 20 October 2021

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

The quality of education

Requires improvement

Behaviour and attitudes

Good

Personal development

Good

Leadership and management

Good

Early years provision

Requires improvement

Previous inspection grade

Requires improvement

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils come first in leaders' eyes. They are well cared for by staff within the positive, Christian atmosphere of Cold Harbour.

Leaders have established clear rules and routines for pupils' behaviour. Pupils, staff and parents all agree these are changes for the better. Pupils say they feel safe. They say that adults do not tolerate bullying in or outside of school. Pupils happily eat their lunch and enjoy playing with friends in the well-developed outdoor environment.

Adults recognise how important it is that pupils at Cold Harbour have access to rich experiences. Many pupils have never taken part in these before. School trips, for example, are carefully chosen to develop pupils' knowledge of the world around them.

Leaders recognise that pupils have not previously had the education they deserve at this school. They are determined to achieve their vision of 'let your light shine' for pupils but staff's expectations of what pupils can achieve are not yet high enough. The work that pupils do is not sufficiently challenging. Reading is a barrier for some pupils. In the past, staff have not taught pupils to read quickly enough.

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

Cold Harbour has been through a turbulent period since the last inspection in 2017. Changes in senior leadership and staffing saw standards decline. Since the appointment of the executive headteacher in September 2020, this has been reversed. Despite the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic, leaders have introduced sweeping reforms which have made a difference. Momentum is shifting and everyone is committed to creating an ambitious curriculum for all pupils. However, there is still some way to go to ensure pupils acquire the knowledge they need.

Newly appointed subject leaders have reviewed the content of curriculum plans to check that it is better sequenced. In subjects such as mathematics and science, staff show strong subject knowledge in explaining ideas clearly to pupils. Vocabulary is reviewed regularly to help pupils use words correctly in their work. In other subjects, there is a lack of ambition. The selection of topics in some subjects is not enabling pupils to learn as well as they might. There is a tendency, from early years upwards, to focus on skills and on children doing fun tasks. In some subjects, plans do not break down the knowledge into a logical and sequential order.

Staff lack expertise in delivering the curriculum in a way that helps pupils to know and remember more. Activities set do not lend themselves to pupils building a well-developed bank of knowledge. The written work pupils produce in different year groups is of varying quality. As a result, some pupils are not making the progress they should.

In learning to read, children follow a well-planned and sequenced phonics programme. However, because many staff are not fully trained, there are inconsistencies in its delivery. This includes staff sending home additional reading books that do not match the taught sounds. Consequently, the weakest readers are not getting the support they need to learn to read quickly. Sometimes, staff use resources and unhelpful strategies which are not part of the phonics programme. This is not helping pupils who have not yet mastered basic reading skills to catch up.

In lessons, pupils behave well. They display positive attitudes to their learning and relationships are strong between adults and children. Leaders have clear systems in place to ensure that any pupil who may exhibit emotional needs is well supported and does not disrupt the learning of others.

For pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, leaders work closely with teachers to identify pupils' needs early. Leaders have trained support staff to work more effectively with pupils in class. Since the last inspection, leaders have ensured parents feel more closely involved with the provision in place for their children.

Leaders ensure pupils can make a positive contribution to society. During the inspection, as part of the school's Christian harvest festival, pupils had collected an abundance of produce to support local food banks. In the curriculum, pupils learn about the challenges refugees face when seeking asylum.

The governing body is skilled in challenging leaders as to whether school priorities are having a positive impact on pupils' learning. Governors carry out their own checks in evaluating the school's improvement journey. They engage with staff regularly, keeping a check on their workload and general well-being.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

A strong culture of safeguarding ensures leaders keep a forensic eye on all children. Communication channels are clear between adults to discuss any emerging worries. Leaders keep detailed records with a clear timeline of actions.

Leaders are shrewd to what is happening in the local area. The school's learning mentor engages well with families to provide support. Leaders do what they can to access early help services.

Pupils know how to stay safe online. They recognise the dangers of inappropriate use of technology. They know not to give away personal information.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- There is a lack of fidelity to the school's chosen phonics programme as leaders and staff have not been fully trained. In addition, staff lack expertise in knowing how to support the weakest readers. Sometimes, staff use alternative reading programmes and strategies that hinder pupils learning to read. Leaders need to ensure all staff are expertly trained to teach pupils to read, particularly those pupils who require extra reading support.
- The curriculum is not ambitious enough in some subjects. Subject plans do not break down the taught knowledge into steps that build towards clearly defined end points. As a result, pupils are not making the progress they should. Leaders need to ensure all subjects are ambitious in content and that knowledge is developed coherently from early years to Year 6.
- The curriculum is not delivered in a way that helps pupils to transfer key knowledge to long-term memory. Leaders' approach to teaching the curriculum is not rooted securely in evidence. As a result, some pupils are not knowing and remembering what has been taught. To deliver the curriculum effectively, leaders need to ensure staff's subject and pedagogical content knowledge is strong.

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 information from Ofsted Parent View 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 are the school and you are 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	110404
Local authority	Milton Keynes
Inspection number	10200865
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	216
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Joanna Grant
Headteacher	Claire Britnell
Website	www.coldharbourschool.org.uk/
Dates of previous inspection	13 and 14 December 2017, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The current executive headteacher joined the school in September 2020 and works part time at the school. She is also the substantive headteacher of a local primary school. Most of the governors are new since the last inspection.
- The school is in the process of reducing its published admissions number to become a one-form entry school.
- The school is not currently using any alternative provision.
- As a Church of England school, Cold Harbour is part of the Diocese of Oxford. The most recent section 48 inspection was in June 2019.

Information about this inspection

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

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with school leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation.

- The lead inspector met with the executive headteacher, members of the senior leadership team and the governing body, including the chair. He also met with a school improvement adviser from the local authority and had a telephone conversation with a representative from the diocese.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives into these subjects: early reading, mathematics, design and technology, history and science. This involved discussion with leaders about these subjects and the curriculum plans, visits to lessons, scrutiny of pupils' work and discussions about the subjects with pupils, teachers and teaching assistants from the lessons visited.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspection team spoke with staff and pupils. They met with members of the designated safeguarding team to examine leaders' knowledge, records and actions. This included reviewing checks on the safer recruitment of staff. Inspectors sampled case files to explore how the school identifies and supports pupils at risk of harm.
- Inspectors spoke to pupils from different year groups. It was not possible for the school to facilitate Ofsted's online pupil survey during the inspection.
- The views of staff, including 21 responses to Ofsted's online staff survey, were considered.
- The 26 responses to Ofsted Parent View, including the same number of written responses, were also taken into account.

Inspection team

James Broadbridge, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Sue Keeling	Her Majesty's Inspector
Francois Walker	Ofsted Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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