

Inspection of Ridgewell Church of England Primary School

Church Lane, Ridgewell, Halstead, Essex CO9 4SA

Inspection dates: 11 and 12 January 2022

Overall effectiveness	Good
The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Good
Early years provision	Good
Previous inspection grade	Not previously inspected under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

What is it like to attend this school?

The school's small size means that everyone knows each other well. Staff welcome pupils into school. Everyone makes sure pupils enjoy school and remain safe. Pupils attend well. Parents praise the good care and support provided for their children.

The school's values and ethos are clearly evident in pupils' good conduct, respect and the care they show for one another. Pupils' behaviour in lessons and around school is good. Pupils said that bullying does not happen.

Pupils' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural education, is good. In assemblies, all pupils enjoy singing. They pray together and celebrate the achievements of others.

Children in Reception class settle quickly. They learn the routines that they need in order to work and play together in the safe, stimulating environment provided. Children gain the essential knowledge and skills, so they are well prepared for the next stage of their education.

Pupils become confident, resilient learners and recognise the importance of reading. Pupils are expected to read often, in school, by themselves and at home. They love mathematics and art. Learning outdoors in physical education and in forest school is popular with pupils.

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

Leaders have worked collectively with staff to establish a new, ambitious curriculum. It aims to develop pupils' knowledge and skills as scientists, historians, explorers, game changers, sporting giants and 'imagineers'. Staff use a range of resources to help inform learning across a broad range of subjects. Staff follow a planned, sequenced curriculum that builds towards what pupils are expected to know and be able to do by the end of each key stage. Teachers link learning across subjects to reinforce pupils' wider understanding and enable them to recall learning they have done previously. Leaders' bold and creative approach is not fully established. However, it is clear from the actions taken so far that staff are in the process of bringing this about.

This year, pupils in the early years and key stage 1 are taught together. Staff quickly forge strong relations with pupils. Pupils enjoy learning by themselves and alongside adults to learn skills in reading, writing and mathematics. Pupils choose and use their time well, so they complete tasks confidently. They enjoy preparing their own snacks. Adults make full use of the well-resourced indoor and outdoor spaces to enhance pupils' experiences.

The teaching of early reading is well established. However, new resources for teaching phonics have been introduced this year. The impact of this new approach has not been fully evaluated. However, pupils read often, and almost all pupils become fluent, confident readers by the end of key stage 1.

Staff share responsibility for developing the curriculum. Curriculum planning shows what should be taught and assessed. However, in a few subjects, the use of these plans is underdeveloped. Some plans lack detail about how pupils of different ages in the same class will build on what they already know and can do.

Inspectors found that in general, pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) learn well. Pupils' needs are suitably identified and known. Leaders plan strategies for staff to support them in lessons. This aspect of the school's work has not been evaluated fully to check that pupils with SEND are receiving the planned help and support they need.

Pupils behave well, and concentrate on their activities without the need for reminders. Breaks and lunchtimes are social events where pupils of all ages eat and play together, and make full use of the excellent school grounds. Weekly personal, social and health education lessons ensure that pupils gain an understanding of British values, respect for others and the different lifestyles people lead. However, the promotion of diversity still requires further work.

New leaders and the extra support available since the school became an academy have led to significant improvements. Leaders and governors know where the school's strengths and weaknesses lie, and have put in place plans to make further improvements. Disruption caused by the COVID-19 pandemic has slowed the implementation of some curriculum changes, and has restricted the trust's monitoring and evaluation of the school's work.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Safeguarding is prioritised. Regular training ensures that staff know what to do if they have concerns. New electronic procedures are in place to record and follow up safeguarding matters. Leaders know which agencies to approach to raise serious concerns and provide help for families at an early stage. All of the necessary checks are made when appointing adults to work with children. Access to the school site is carefully controlled. Pupils are taught how to keep safe when in school and when they are online.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Staffing changes and curriculum developments have led to improvement. Some of these changes and developments are new. New resources introduced to enhance the teaching of phonics, and new curriculum planning in a range of subjects have not been fully established and implemented. Leaders should ensure that these new arrangements are implemented fully and impact on pupils' achievement across all subjects.
- Disruption caused by the COVID-19 pandemic has slowed the implementation of the new curriculum, and has limited the trust's ability to monitor and evaluate the impact of the recent changes made. School and trust leaders should increase their routine monitoring of the school's work, in order to check that changes are working well and are continuing to improve the quality of education that pupils receive.
- Inspectors considered the progress the school has made in developing and embedding an effective curriculum. Leaders are part-way through implementing their plans to redevelop the curriculum. They have an accurate evaluative understanding of current curriculum practice, and are fully aware of the next steps needed to improve curriculum quality and expertise further. For this reason, the transitional arrangements have been applied.

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	144645
Local authority	Essex
Inspection number	10212068
Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	64
Appropriate authority	The board of trustees
Chair of trust	Emma Wigmore
Headteacher	Kirsty Stuart
Website	www.ridgewell.essex.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- The school is much smaller than average. Pupils are taught in three classes: Reception and Years 1 and 2; Years 3 and 4; and Years 5 and 6.
- The school became an academy in August 2017. It is sponsored by the Diocese of Chelmsford Vine Schools Multi-Academy Trust.
- When its predecessor school, Ridgewell Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School, was last fully inspected by Ofsted, it was judged to be inadequate.
- Since opening as an academy, two executive headteachers have led the school. A new, substantive headteacher took up her role in April 2021.
- At its last Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) inspection in October 2019, the school was judged to be good.
- The majority of pupils are white British. Very few are from minority ethnic backgrounds.
- The proportion of pupils with SEND is above average.
- The proportion of pupils eligible for the pupil premium is broadly average.
- The school does not make use of any alternative, off-site provision.

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 leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors met with all staff, including the headteacher and the special educational needs coordinator, class teachers and teaching assistants. They met with a representative of the multi-academy trust. They held an online meeting with one member of staff, and another online meeting with six members of the governing body and the multi-academy trust.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives into early reading, science, art and personal, social and health education. This included discussions with subject leaders, visits to lessons, talking with pupils and scrutinising their work.
- Inspectors met with the designated leader for safeguarding and scrutinised the school's single central record.
- Inspectors considered 15 responses to Ofsted's survey of parents, Parent View; 15 free-text responses from parents; and 8 responses to Ofsted's staff survey. The school did not use Ofsted's survey of pupils' views.

Inspection team

John Mitcheson, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Brenda Watson

Ofsted Inspector

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