

Inspection of The Coombes Church of England Primary School

School Road, Arborfield, Reading, Berkshire RG2 9NX

Inspection dates: 25 and 26 January 2022

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

The quality of education

Requires improvement

Behaviour and attitudes

Requires improvement

Personal development

Good

Leadership and management

Requires improvement

Early years provision

Requires improvement

Previous inspection grade

Not previously inspected under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils enjoy school and say that their teachers try to make learning fun. During lunchtimes, pupils like being active and playing with their friends. Older pupils like taking on extra responsibilities by being one of the 'red and green cap' helpers. They also value the charity days when they join in with special events and raise money to help other people.

Pupils feel safe in school. However, a minority of them are not confident that staff sort out some incidents of bullying. These pupils told inspectors that they are sometimes reluctant to report issues as they do not want to get others into trouble. While most classes are settled and pupils work with positive attitudes, this is not the case everywhere. In a few classes in key stage 2, pupils regularly disturb the learning for others, and staff do not deal with this consistently well.

Pupils experience an interesting curriculum and learn a wide range of subjects. However, they do not achieve as well as they should. This is because the curriculum is not planned or taught consistently well. Although leaders have high expectations, these are not currently being realised.

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

The school has been through a period of turbulence. There have been recent changes to the leadership team. A few classes in key stage 2 have had a succession of different teachers during the year. The disruption to education, as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, has also been a challenge. It has been an unsettling time for everyone in the school community.

The interim executive headteacher has a secure understanding of what needs to be done to improve the school. He is keen to make improvements and get the school back on track. Since his appointment in October 2021, he has helped to stabilise the school and address some immediate premises issues. However, there is still much to do.

Leaders' work to improve the consistency of the early reading programme has been successful. Phonics is taught well, and staff make sure that children in the early years get off to a prompt start to learning to read. Throughout the school, the English curriculum enables pupils to get to know and read many different texts. Teachers provide support for any pupils who are at risk of falling behind. Nonetheless, reading books are not always matched well to the sounds that pupils know. Occasionally, staff ask pupils to apply their phonics knowledge to read words that cannot be sounded out in this way. Some reading areas and books are unappealing and do not entice pupils to read or promote a love of reading.

Leaders articulate a clear and ambitious vision for the curriculum. They have worked hard to make meaningful links between subjects and create topics that pupils enjoy. In some subjects, such as physical education, leaders have considered very carefully

how pupils' knowledge needs to build step by step over time. However, in many other subjects, including mathematics, leaders have not identified with precision what they would like pupils to learn and remember.

There are inconsistencies in how well pupils in key stage 2 are taught. This is particularly the case in classes that have been affected by frequent staffing changes. As a result, the quality of education that pupils receive is not consistently good. Behaviour is also inconsistent across the school. Some pupils in key stage 2 feel a sense of frustration that some unacceptable behaviour goes unchecked by their teachers. In contrast, younger pupils in the early years and key stage 1 behave sensibly and courteously. Across the school, relationships are positive.

Leaders have put in place suitable processes to enable them to identify any pupils who may have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). The new leader for SEND has high ambition. She has worked with staff to improve the support for pupils with SEND so that this is now more closely shaped around their needs.

The school ensures that pupils learn about how to keep safe when online. Pupils also learn about the importance of the school's values, such as kindness. They are taught to respect differences and understand that families come in all different shapes and sizes.

Governance is not strong enough. Governors and trustees do not hold an accurate view of the school and, over time, have not held leaders to account well enough. Although staff enjoy working at the school, staffing changes have resulted in increased workload. Many parents express concern about behaviour.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders and staff are alert to any signs that pupils may be at risk of harm. Leaders make sure that pupils and their families get the support that they need. Recruitment checks are thorough. All pupils spoken to told inspectors that they feel safe in school. However, a minority of pupils are not confident that bullying is followed up well. They are sometimes worried that this may be viewed as telling tales. The interim executive headteacher has taken effective action to address some immediate issues in relation to the safety of the school site.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Reading books are not consistently matched well enough to pupils' reading skills. Some staff encourage pupils to sound out words that are not decodable. The school is not doing enough to promote a love of reading and pupils are not developing their reading as well as they could be. Leaders need to ensure that

books are matched well to pupils' reading abilities and improve staff's guidance. They need to do more to promote a love of reading.

- Leaders have not identified the component knowledge that builds towards the school's curriculum goals. Consequently, some content is left to teachers to decide. Leaders should identify precisely the important knowledge that they want pupils to learn and remember. This will support staff in ensuring that pupils have secured key knowledge.
- There are inconsistencies in the quality of teaching in key stage 2. As a result, pupils are not achieving well enough. Leaders need to ensure that these inconsistencies are addressed and provide additional support where teaching needs to improve.
- In some key stage 2 classes, the conduct of some pupils disturbs the learning for others. Staff's response to unacceptable conduct is inconsistent. Leaders need to provide training and support for staff so that they can implement the behaviour policy consistently well.
- A minority of pupils are not confident that staff sort out some incidents of bullying. They are sometimes reluctant to report issues as they do not want to get other pupils into trouble. Leaders need to make sure that pupils are confident in reporting concerns and understand the actions that staff have taken to address these. They need to ensure that their records include a clear account of any incidents of bullying and what action the school has taken. This will support pupils, as well as their parents, in being satisfied that any issues have been addressed.
- Governors' and trustees' strategic oversight and work to improve the school has not been effective enough. They do not have an accurate view of the school. Over time, governors and trustees have not held leaders to account well enough. They have not ensured that maintenance issues around the school site have been addressed in a sufficiently timely manner. They need to improve their oversight and systems of accountability and ensure that remaining maintenance issues are addressed swiftly. Trustees and governors need to implement their plans to improve the quality of education and pupils' behaviour.

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	144637
Local authority	Wokingham
Inspection number	10203172
Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	456
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Jane Peters
Headteacher	Luke Henderson (Interim)
Website	www.thecoombes.com
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- The school converted to be an academy school in September 2017. When its predecessor school, with the same name, was last inspected, it was judged to be inadequate.
- The school is a sponsor-led academy and one of nine Church of England primary schools in The Keys Academy Trust. The board of trustees have delegated many strategic responsibilities to the school's local governing body. The trust has outlined these arrangements in their scheme of delegation. The trust remains the responsible body for this school.
- The school's last Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) took place in June 2015. The school's next SIAMS inspection is due to take place during this school year.
- There have been many recent changes to the senior leadership team. The previous headteacher left the school in December 2021 following a long period of absence. A new acting head of school was appointed to the school in May 2021 and currently works part-time at the school. The current interim executive headteacher was appointed to the school in October 2021. The trust is in the process of recruiting a permanent full-time headteacher to the school.

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 carried out deep dives in reading, mathematics, geography, art and design and physical education. Inspectors met with subject leaders, visited some lessons, sampled pupils' work, met with teachers and spoke with some pupils about their learning.
- Inspectors sampled pupils' writing and their work in history and French. They considered the school's curriculum in these subjects and held discussions with subject leaders and pupils.
- Inspectors met with the acting head of school, the interim executive headteacher, the deputy headteacher and the leader for SEND.
- The lead inspector met with the chief executive officer and the chief finance officer from the trust. She also met with the school business manager and a representative from the local authority.
- To inspect safeguarding, inspectors reviewed school policies, procedures and records, including the school's record of recruitment checks. The lead inspector met with the leader responsible for safeguarding. Inspectors also spoke with staff and pupils.
- The lead inspector held discussions with a group of trustees and governors, including the chair of the board of trustees and the chair of the local governing body.
- Inspectors took account of parents' views through their responses to the online survey, Ofsted Parent View. Inspectors considered parents' written responses and an inspector met with parents at the start of the second day of the inspection.
- Inspectors considered the views of staff during meetings with them and their responses to Ofsted's confidential staff survey. Inspectors held meetings with pupils and spoke with pupils at other times of day, including during play and lunchtimes.

Inspection team

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Ofsted Inspector

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