

Inspection of Christ Church Church of England First School

Feltham Lane, Frome, Somerset BA11 5AJ

Inspection dates: 8–10 February 2022

Overall effectiveness

Inadequate

The quality of education

Inadequate

Behaviour and attitudes

Inadequate

Personal development

Inadequate

Leadership and management

Inadequate

Early years provision

Inadequate

Previous inspection grade

Requires improvement

What is it like to attend this school?

This is a school in turmoil. Too many pupils are unhappy and not safe. Their behaviour too often is unruly. Pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), frequently wander around or choose not to join in with lessons. Pupils talk over each other and do not listen well to adults. This disrupts their learning and sometimes puts them in dangerous situations.

Most staff are dedicated and care deeply about pupils. However, there is a lack of support or consistency from some senior leaders in managing pupils' behaviour. This has left staff feeling frustrated and isolated. Morale in the school is low. The volatile nature of the school means staff are exhausted and pupils are not kept safe.

Pupils say that there is some bullying. However, staff are not always aware of this. Therefore, there are times when adults fail to identify episodes of bullying or intervene in a timely manner.

The quality of education is inadequate. Pupils' knowledge and understanding are far behind where they should be, including in English and mathematics. The curriculum is poorly planned. Pupils, including those with SEND, often struggle to gain the knowledge they need to be successful. Teachers' expectations are low. Consequently, pupils are not well prepared for the next stage in their education. This includes children in the early years foundation stage (EYFS), who do not get off to the strong start that they need.

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

The school has declined since the previous inspection. Recently, there have been a series of resignations from the governing body. This means the school is functioning without the authority of a legally constituted governing body. Leaders are failing to run or manage the school effectively to meet its statutory responsibilities, including in the EYFS. This situation is untenable and leaves pupils experiencing a sub-standard quality of care and education.

Senior leaders and governors have not taken the right actions to improve the school. They are not sufficiently ambitious on behalf of pupils. For too long, they have failed to address the weaknesses in pupils' behaviour, attitudes and learning. As a result, the school is now in desperate straits. Staff are overly busy managing pupils on a day-to-day basis, which impairs planning to improve the school over the longer term. There is limited capacity to secure the necessary improvements.

There are some leaders who are making valiant attempts to improve the school. For example, curriculum leaders are trying to develop their subjects, such as in science. However, their impact is weakened because of the poor behaviour in lessons.

Leaders have not ensured that the school has an ambitious or coherent curriculum, including in the EYFS. Weaknesses in curriculum design mean pupils do not learn essential knowledge in a logical order, in a range of subjects. Therefore, learning 'jumps around', so pupils cannot build knowledge sequentially or apply what they know. Pupils have significant gaps in their knowledge in English and mathematics and the wider curriculum. Pupils with SEND struggle to catch up and are not making the progress that they need to.

Leaders are taking the right steps to improve early reading and phonics. The school now has an appropriate phonics programme in place. However, many of the actions taken are too recent to have had a strong enough impact for pupils. Some teachers still lack the expertise to implement the phonics programme well. This includes using assessments of pupils to match the right book for pupils to practise reading the letters and sounds they are learning. There are still too many pupils who do not have a secure understanding of the phonics code to be able to learn how to read. There is confusion in the nursery about the best ways to prepare children for the early stages of reading.

Leaders in the EYFS have not developed an appropriate curriculum for children. The curriculum fails to take into account different areas of learning well enough or set out the small steps of learning to support children's early development, including for two-year-olds. As a result, children are not well prepared for the next stage in their education. For example, children in the Reception Year are unable to concentrate well and find it difficult to listen and join in with lessons. This EYFS provision, including the nursery, is not compliant with the school's policies or some national expectations, such as how staff should manage and record nappy changes or carefully thought-out sleeping arrangements for children, when needed.

Pupils' social and moral development is poor. Pupils acknowledge that they make wrong decisions that affect others. They do not always behave in a way which reflects British values, including showing tolerance or mutual respect. There is an underlying lack of respect across the school. As a result, pupils are not well prepared for life in modern Britain or for the next steps in their lives. However, there are times when the older pupils like to help the younger ones. They are keen to have a greater say in how the school is run, for example, through the school council.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are not effective.

Senior leaders and governors do not promote a strong culture of safeguarding. They have failed to implement or check key policies designed to keep pupils safe. For example, recruitment checks recorded on the single central record, induction of staff and recording episodes of physical restraint are not completed as they should be. There is a lax attitude to safeguarding which puts pupils at an unacceptable risk of harm.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Senior leaders have not secured a strong culture of safeguarding. Consequently, pupils are at risk of harm. Leaders must act swiftly to implement effective systems and eradicate the lax attitude to safeguarding that permeates through aspects of the school's work to keep pupils safe.
- The school does not have an effective, operational governing body in place. As a result, it is failing to ensure that leaders are discharging their legal duties and responsibilities accordingly. Leaders must act urgently to work with the local authority and diocese to ensure that a governing body is established to secure the necessary improvements.
- Senior leaders have failed to implement an effective behaviour management system. Inconsistent expectations and poor daily management of behaviour disrupt lessons and lead to situations where pupils are not safe. Leaders must introduce measures to rapidly improve behaviour for all pupils across the school.
- Senior leaders do not consider the views or well-being of staff well enough. There are too many members of staff who now feel overawed and exhausted, mostly due to managing pupils' poor behaviour. Morale in the school is low. Leaders must work closely with staff to promote their welfare, help them feel valued and improve pupils' behaviour.
- Leaders do not have an ambitious curriculum for pupils. The curriculum is poorly designed and fails to meet the needs of pupils, including those with SEND. Leaders must implement a coherent and well sequenced curriculum in all subjects so pupils are ready for the next stage of their education.
- Recent efforts to improve pupils' early reading and phonics are not yet established well enough. Too many pupils are still far behind and are struggling to catch up, including those with SEND. Leaders must continue to improve teachers' expertise and use of assessment, including matching books more closely to pupils' phonic knowledge, so that pupils learn the phonic code quickly to help them learn to read.
- Leaders do not ensure that the EYFS is compliant with statutory guidance. The curriculum and other arrangements, including for two-year-olds, are not fit for purpose. As a result, children are not prepared well enough for their next stage, whether that is Nursery, Reception or key stage 1. Leaders must ensure the school provides a high-quality early years curriculum with suitable provision for all ages and needs.

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	123757
Local authority	Somerset
Inspection number	10220960
Type of school	First
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	2 to 9
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	194
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	John Price
Headteacher	Rupert Kaye
Website	www.christchurchschoolfrome.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	12 May 2021, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school is located in Frome, Somerset. It caters for pupils from two to nine years of age and has an on-site nursery.
- The school is part of Somerset local authority.
- Christ Church First Church of England Voluntary Controlled School is part of the Diocese of Bath and Wells.
- The school's previous section 48 inspection was in April 2015.
- The school currently uses one registered alternative provider.

Information about this inspection

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

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.

- 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 did not visit the mixed Year 1/2 classes during the inspection as these were closed due to the pandemic. However, other evidence pertaining to these pupils' learning and experiences was fully considered as part of this inspection.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives into these subjects: early reading, mathematics and history. Inspectors also evaluated science as part of this inspection.
- For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. Inspectors also looked at individual plans for pupils with SEND to see how these are implemented.
- An inspector scrutinised the single central record.
- An inspector checked the school's systems for monitoring and reporting safeguarding concerns. An inspector met with the designated safeguarding lead and held a separate telephone discussion with leaders of the alternative provision used by the school.
- An inspector also met with the special educational needs coordinator via a video call to help evaluate SEND provision and practice in the school.
- Inspectors spoke with a range of staff and met with groups of pupils to find out what it is like to be a pupil, or to work, in this school.
- Inspectors were unable to meet with representatives of the governing body or any who have recently resigned.
- The lead inspector reviewed key documentation, including the school's self-evaluation form, action plans, governors' minutes and the headteacher's report to the governing body.
- The lead inspector checked all survey responses, including those from pupils, staff and parents. This included the 20 views on Ofsted Parent View, and taking the 16 responses to Ofsted's free-text service into account. The lead inspector also considered the views of parents raised through letters and other direct communication with the inspection team.

Inspection team

Stewart Gale, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Caroline Dulon

Her Majesty's Inspector

Marcia Northeast

Ofsted Inspector

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