

St Andrew's Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School

Mathews Close, Halstead, CO9 2BH

Inspection dates

15–16 January 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	This inspection:	Requires improvement	3
Achievement of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Requires improvement	3

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement. It is not good because

- Pupils' progress is not consistently rapid across the school because some teaching requires improvement. Their reading and writing skills are behind those they develop in mathematics.
- Pupils do not practise reading and writing skills enough in other subjects.
- Pupils, especially the more able, are sometimes not given enough challenge.
- Teachers' questions are not always effective in moving learning on.
- Pupils are not always given enough guidance on how to improve their work or opportunities to respond to teachers' comments.
- Improvements to teaching have been slowed because the school has not had consistent leadership.
- When leaders check on teaching they do not all check on the impact the teaching is having on pupils' progress.

The school has the following strengths

- Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage make good progress because learning opportunities are well planned inside and outdoors.
- The school is improving. The acting deputy head and new acting headteacher have made good starts.
- The teaching in some classes is good.
- The behaviour of pupils is good, both in lessons and around the school. Pupils feel safe and show a good understanding of how to stay safe. Their attendance is above average.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 15 lessons and parts of lessons.
- Meetings were held with pupils, members of staff and the Chair of the Governing Body. A discussion was held with a representative from the local authority.
- The inspectors took account of the 34 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) in planning and carrying out the inspection.
- Inspectors observed the school's work. They looked at a wide range of documentation, which included national assessment data and the school's own assessments, the school's self-evaluation, minutes from governing body meetings, samples of pupils' work and safeguarding information.

Inspection team

Richard Blackmore, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Ruth Dollner	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This is a larger than average-sized primary school.
- There are two mixed age classes for Reception/Year 1 and Year 1/Year2.
- Most of the pupils are White British, with others representing a range of ethnic backgrounds.
- A lower than average proportion of pupils are supported by school action.
- The proportion supported by school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is below average.
- The proportion of pupils supported by funding through the pupil premium is below average. These funds are extra money given to schools by the government to support specific groups, including those known to be entitled to free school meals.
- The school meets current floor standards, which are the minimum government expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- The school runs a before-school club.
- None of the school's pupils are in alternative provision (none are taught in other schools or units).
- There is an acting headteacher who took up the role in January 2013. The acting deputy headteacher took up her post in September 2012.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching especially in reading and writing, so pupils' progress is at least good throughout the school by:
 - sharing more widely the good teaching already found in the school
 - using a consistent system of marking pupils' work throughout the school so pupils are given clear feedback that shows them how to improve and teachers ensure pupils put the feedback into practice
 - use assessment information to match work more carefully to pupils' abilities so pupils, especially the more able, are always challenged
 - ensuring questioning is used well in lessons so learning moves forward at a brisk pace.
- Improve the quality and impact of leadership and management by:
 - accelerating improvements to the quality of teaching
 - ensuring that the assessments of the quality of teaching by all leaders take account of the impact teaching has on pupils' progress
 - providing a systematic programme to ensure pupils practise their reading and writing skills in other subjects.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Standards are in line with the national average at the end of Key Stages 1 and 2 in reading, writing and mathematics. There is no difference between the progress made of pupils from different ethnic backgrounds. However, progress is not consistently good in all year groups.
- Pupils' progress is uneven across Key Stage 1 and 2 because teachers' planning fails to ensure that pupils' skills are consistently built on effectively and that activities are always sufficiently challenging. Current assessment information shows an improving picture.
- Children enjoy their time in the Early Years Foundation Stage. They enter with skills and knowledge that are slightly lower than is typical for their age. Teachers encourage them to make choices and become independent and consequently they make good progress. For example, the 'super heroes' role play area is encouraging children to frequently write words and sentences while teachers also use this space to develop their understanding of the sounds that letters make.
- Pupils are generally making progress similar to other pupils of their age. Pupils reach higher levels and make faster progress in mathematics than they do in reading and writing. Recently, teachers have concentrated on improving pupils' writing. The emphasis on boosting writing skills has given pupils more confidence to write at length.
- Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs make good progress. Tasks are usually set at their ability and support in class and small groups is effective. Teaching assistants knowledgeably support pupils with varying needs and ensure they remain highly focused during lessons.
- There are few pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium. This funding is spent on interventions such as one to one support in lessons and activities to raise pupils' self-esteem. In 2012 the Year 6 results showed that the attainment gap between pupils known to be entitled to free school meals and the attainment of other pupils was less than it was nationally. That year some of these pupils made better progress than others.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- While there is some good teaching in the school, consistently good teaching resulting in sustained good progress is not yet evident throughout.
- In most lessons teachers encourage pupils to identify if they are confident with what they are doing or if they need extra help. Pupils then receive additional advice. They receive comments in their books that tell them how to make work better. This feedback and guidance are helpful but they are not consistent throughout the school. Pupils do not always know how to improve their work or what to do to reach the next level, and do not always respond to comments.
- Assessment and tracking systems provide information about how well pupils are doing. However, teachers do not all use this information to set sufficiently challenging targets and activities, and match tasks to pupils' different abilities. Where work is not challenging enough progress slows. This is particularly the case for more-able pupils.
- Where teaching requires improvement, pupils are not questioned in a way that challenges them

to reflect on their own learning. Sometimes questions confuse pupils, or pupils are over-reliant on the teacher for the answers. In teaching reading, teachers do not always ask sufficiently challenging questions about the books pupils have read. This means that words or sections of the book that are not known by pupils can remain misunderstood. In the more effective lessons teachers use questions skilfully to judge how well pupils have learned so they can decide whether some or all are ready to move on or need more time to strengthen their understanding.

- Children in the mixed Reception and Year 1 class enjoy an effective range of well-planned activities. They have lots of chances to learn together and develop their abilities quickly, including personal and social skills. Teachers have developed an exciting classroom that is a very positive and welcoming environment and is adapted to individual pupils' needs and interest.
- Very good teaching was seen in a Year 6 literacy lesson, where pupils debated the impact of tourism on the big cats in Zambia. Work and questions were well matched to pupils' needs and learning was effectively structured with all pupils being provided with good levels of challenge. Pupils were given clear guidance and, as a result, they made good progress academically, socially and morally.
- Good relationships and the way that teachers organise their classrooms help pupils to learn well. Pupils are confident about sharing ideas and know that teachers value what they say. This makes them keener to take part in lessons.

The behaviour and safety of pupils

are good

- Behaviour is good and the school is a happy place to learn. Pupils appreciate the respect their teachers show them and respond likewise to each other. They are extremely courteous to visitors and eager to share their like of and pride in their school. The school councillors help pupils to develop a sense of belonging and pupils say that these roles are important.
- Pupils are keen to learn and listen well to their teachers. In lessons, they are eager to contribute to discussions and they produce the work that is expected with little need for staff to keep reminding them. Pupils are ready to help each other during lessons.
- Pupils arrive in classrooms punctually and settle quickly to their work. When groups change activity or move to another room there is minimal fuss and little time is wasted. Additional adults facilitate this well.
- The pupils' very good attendance is because the school swiftly follows up any absences and works closely with parents to encourage regular attendance. It offers a breakfast club that provides a healthy and enjoyable start to the school day for those who attend.
- Pupils say that they feel safe and know how to be safe, including e-safety. They understand about types of bullying, such as cyber bullying, and know what to do if they have concerns. Parents and carers and their children confirm that they enjoy school and feel well looked after.

The leadership and management

requires improvement

- Since the last inspection, instability in the school leadership has made rapid improvement difficult to secure. Staff have ensured standards are maintained and actions have been taken to improve areas of slower progress, such as writing. Improvements have been made to teaching, but not at a fast enough rate to raise progress rapidly to good.

- The school self-evaluation is accurate – senior leaders know what needs to be done to improve. Senior leaders make better and more regular checks on the quality of teaching and planning than evidence shows was the case before Autumn 2012. This monitoring now informs whole-school training. While the school's judgements on teaching are accurate, they do not always focus on the impact that teaching has on achievement. This makes it harder to prioritise areas for improvement.
- The acting headteacher has been a strong driving force in improvement since her very recent appointment. For example, she is quickly addressing the concerns about the school that parents raised in the online questionnaire. With support from the governing body and senior staff she has raised expectations and ambition for the school.
- The acting headteacher and acting deputy headteacher analyse data about pupils' progress effectively and identify what needs to be done to improve it. The information gathered is increasingly being used by teachers to bring about improvements in pupils' performance, for example in writing. The school's accurate self-evaluation and improvements made, reflected in school data about pupils' current progress, show there is capacity for further improvement.
- Arrangements for managing the performance of teachers are not yet routinely effective and rigorous, because of changes in management. Arrangements made by the current senior leaders however, meet requirements. Senior leaders meet with teachers in order to monitor pupils' progress, identify underachievement and set targets intended to improve pupils' results. Until recently teachers have not been robustly held to account for the performance of groups of pupils, particularly the more-able pupils.
- The curriculum is appropriately organised and offers opportunities for pupils to use their skills across subjects but not always as part of a structured programme to reinforce specific aspects such as reading and writing. It promotes pupils' spiritual, moral and social skills well.
- The local authority has organised for the school to work in partnership with other schools. The acting headteacher, governors and the local authority have worked closely to quickly establish a detailed monitoring programme, including lesson observations to raise pupils' achievement. As yet the good teaching in the school is not consistently used as a model for teaching that requires improvement.
- Safeguarding arrangements meet requirements and discrimination is not tolerated. The school promotes equality of opportunity and has focused some attention on more-able pupils. Although they have made some headway in raising their attainment, this group does not make as much progress as they should in all lessons, particularly in reading and writing.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governors are carrying out their role effectively. They are aware of the school's strengths and weaknesses through visits and the analysis of data and as a result the governing body has an appropriate knowledge of how good the quality of teaching is. It knows about the school's processes for monitoring and its work in managing the performance of teachers. It has ensured that teachers' pay is linked to performance and that systems to improve teachers' performance through improved monitoring and training have been established. The governing body has appropriately high aspirations with regard to pupils' achievement, and an adequate knowledge of achievement data. Governors continue to improve their expertise in setting challenging targets for the progress of groups of pupils and in devising ways to keep a close check on pupils' progress. The governing body ensures finances are used well, including the pupil premium.

What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	115133
Local authority	Essex
Inspection number	405567

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	235
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Darren Burr
Headteacher (acting)	Jane Hunter
Date of previous school inspection	14 March 2011
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