

Southminster Church of England Primary School

Burnham Road, Southminster, Essex CM0 7ES

Inspection dates

10–11 July 2018

Overall effectiveness	Requires improvement
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Requires improvement
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Requires improvement
Early years provision	Requires improvement
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Inadequate

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- Despite significant improvement, the achievement of pupils is not yet good. Pupils are not making consistently good progress in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of key stage 2.
- Teaching does not always make use of assessment precisely enough to plan learning to meet the specific needs of pupils, especially those who are the most able, and including those most-able disadvantaged pupils. As a result, these pupils are not achieving the highest standards by the end of key stage 2.
- Although pupils access a wide range of subjects, the quality of their experience is typically too varied. Some teachers are not confident in teaching the full range of the wider curriculum subjects, most notably science.
- The planning of activities in early years is not precisely enough aligned to the needs of children. As a result, there is a lack of focus on the purpose of the learning.
- Leaders and governors have not yet secured the full understanding and confidence of all staff and parents in changes that have been made. Some staff and parents feel that leaders do not communicate well, and do not listen to their views.

The school has the following strengths

- Leaders, governors and the trust have taken decisive and effective action to stem the significant decline identified in the previous inspection. Consequently, this school is no longer inadequate.
- Leaders have brought real improvements to pupils' learning attitudes, behaviour and attendance. Pupils' behaviour is now securely good.
- Leaders and governors support pupils' wellbeing and development well. This is a strength in the school's provision.
- The executive headteacher, governors and the trust are successfully eradicating weaker teaching and learning.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the quality of teaching and pupils' learning and progress, so that more achieve the expected and higher standards, by:
 - raising teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve
 - ensuring that all teachers use assessment information precisely to plan lessons to meet pupils' specific needs, especially for the most able, including the most able disadvantaged pupils
 - continuing to monitor and support teachers who need further guidance and training to improve their practice
 - improving teachers' subject knowledge in areas such as science to improve assessment and pupils' learning in all subjects across the wider curriculum.
- Further develop the provision in the early years, so that purposeful activities meet children's needs and enable them to make the best possible progress from their starting points.
- Improve relationships with staff and parents, so that all stakeholders feel that they are listened to, and play a positive role in raising standards in the school.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- Leaders, governors and the trust tenaciously put the best interests of children and pupils at Southminster at the heart of what they do. Leaders refuse to resort to 'quick fixes' and have taken meaningful action to improve the school, despite significant challenges along the way. Leaders have quickly and firmly removed the inadequacies that were identified by inspectors in October 2016. They are bringing about strong improvements to the standards and quality of provision in the school, often in the face of significant adversity.
- The executive headteacher, with support from the head of school and assistant headteacher, knows and understands the overall strengths and weaknesses in the school. The executive headteacher and the head of school have been resolute about challenging staff underperformance. Leaders have not shied away from making tough decisions to ensure that pupils get a better learning experience. Through regular checking, leaders have effectively raised standards in teaching and learning, and eradicated almost all weaker teaching and learning.
- Leaders use an efficient system to manage the performance of teachers. This is ensuring that leaders effectively hold teachers to account for the pupils in their care. For example, staff appraisal targets are explicitly linked to how teachers can improve their practice and how well pupils achieve.
- Leaders work well with other schools to check the quality of their provision, and to find support where they need to raise standards. This has had a significantly positive impact in English, and in raising the standards of teaching and learning in the school. The extensive work undertaken with other schools, in particular around agreeing the standards of pupils' work, has helped secure the accuracy of teachers' judgements of pupils' achievement.
- Systems for reporting and checking 'six-weekly plans', assessments and progress contribute effectively to leaders' scrutiny and rigorous monitoring of teaching and learning. Leaders successfully identify areas to improve and immediately put in place support and provision to secure rapid improvement where needed. As a result, pupils' progress is stronger and, where there is a risk that pupils may fall behind, this is quickly rectified.
- Additional funding to support disadvantaged pupils is spent effectively. Regular checks are made to evaluate the impact on learning for disadvantaged pupils. The funding is used to ensure that there are experienced staff and resources to support pupils to improve and quicken their progress. As a result of this, disadvantaged pupils' progress has improved this year, both academically and in terms of their personal and social development.
- The additional funding for pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities is used effectively. Pupils are supported well and are making better progress from their starting points than previously. The special educational needs coordinator identifies that pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities could make even more progress and has clear plans in place to secure further improvement.

- Leaders ensure that funding for physical education (PE) and sport is spent appropriately. It has been used to help pupils access more opportunities for sporting activities. This has resulted in pupils entering more external sporting competitions. Teachers are rightly proud of pupils' performance and ranking in recent competitive sports. Consequently, pupils feel more confident. Additionally, a specialist coach is supporting teachers to improve the quality of teaching and learning in PE throughout the school. The school's chosen approach to the teaching of PE is also supporting pupils to develop further good sporting attitudes towards winning and losing.
- Leaders are reviewing the wider curriculum to ensure that all subjects receive full coverage and that there is a clear progression through the skills that pupils are taught. Pupils experience a wider breadth of experiences than previously, such as going on visits, including residential visits, and having visitors to the school. Furthermore, focused curriculum days are planned to give pupils the opportunity to use and apply the skills they learn.
- The curriculum equips pupils with the knowledge and understanding necessary to work with, accept and respect others. This prepares them well for life in modern Britain; for example, through the school's election process and the work of the school council. Pupils said that they felt that their views were listened to. For example, the school council shared pupils' views about laptops and these were then updated. A request for additional playground equipment subsequently led to more being purchased for pupils to enjoy.
- The academy trust provides appropriately focused support to the school. They keep a close eye on the school's performance and recognise the strong capacity of leaders to bring about continuous improvements. The trust has conducted regular school visits. Leaders and governors do not shy away from scrutinising the school's own effectiveness. The school is part of a trust with other local schools. They work closely together to share new ideas and provide training for staff.
- Staff views within the school are varied. While some staff recognise the challenges faced by the school and understand leaders' efforts to improve the school from a low starting point, others do not feel listened to or well supported. This is having a negative impact on the morale of some staff.
- Parental views of the school are mixed, and often more negative. Inspectors found that leaders are moving the school forward rapidly, however, at times leaders have not communicated the rationale behind their actions and the many changes in the school, such as staffing turbulence. This is resulting in parents expressing frustration with the quality of communication and also about the staff turnover at the school. Parents did tell inspectors, however, that leaders have effectively improved behaviour and this was more consistent and positive across the school.

Governance of the school

- Since the previous inspection, the quality of governance is more effective. Governors now receive more relevant and purposeful information. They challenge the school in constructive ways and, collectively, have a better understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. This is resulting in a greater level of challenge to hold leaders to account for school improvement.

- The legal duties on safeguarding are clearly understood by the governing body, ensuring that staff are recruited with careful consideration. Regular checks are made by governors with regard to safeguarding records.
- Governors effectively monitor the impact of the additional funding for pupil premium, the PE and sport premium and additional funding for pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities to ensure that it is spent effectively to improve pupils' outcomes.
- Governors, including the trust, recognise the need to build the confidence and trust of those parents and staff who have negative views about the school, so that they understand the vision for the school's development and can make a positive contribution as improvements are pursued.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- All aspects of safeguarding have improved significantly since the previous inspection. Leaders have been rigorous in ensuring that the previous issues highlighted as concerns have been fully eradicated. This has resulted in safeguarding systems and processes being effective and the safety and well-being of children and pupils being the highest of priorities among all school staff.
- Leaders make sure that checks on staff are carried out and recorded carefully. The named governor for safeguarding regularly checks these records. Governors make sure that checks on staff and volunteers are thorough and that they are safe to work with pupils.
- Safeguarding systems have been fully reviewed and put in place. These are understood and carried out diligently by all staff. Records are detailed, clear and up to date. The designated safeguarding leads act swiftly and maintains effective monitoring to ensure that pupils are well looked after.
- Leaders make sure that staff receive up-to-date training in all aspects of safeguarding. Consequently, staff are knowledgeable about the signs to look for that may indicate that a child or adult is at risk of harm.
- All reasonable steps have been taken to ensure that pupils are kept safe on site. Levels of staff supervision are strategically deployed to minimise any risk and appropriately detailed risk assessments are in place to ensure that pupils are looked after and kept safe.
- Pupils spoken to during the inspection reported feeling safe at school. They know how to keep themselves safe in a variety of situations. When talking to inspectors they show that they understand how to manage risk. Through the curriculum, pupils are made aware of the risks of using the internet and social media. Pupils talk confidently about what they should and should not do. They feel confident approaching adults at school if they have a concern and say that they know it will be taken seriously and dealt with.
- The majority of parents who responded to the Ofsted online questionnaire, Parent View, confirm that their children feel safe.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- The quality of teaching and, as a result, pupils' learning are not consistently good between classes. Leaders have rightly made improving teaching a central focus of their work. The actions they have taken since the previous inspection have improved the quality of pupils' learning experiences. However, the quality of teaching, learning and assessment, while improving, remains too variable across different classes in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Not all teachers routinely take enough account of pupils' previous learning to set high expectations about what they should achieve. Some are not adhering to the school's agreed assessment policy. Subsequently, tasks do not sufficiently build on what pupils already know and, typically, do not challenge pupils to achieve what they are capable of. On occasion, this leads to pupils repeating work and limits the progress that they make. This is particularly the case with the most able pupils.
- The teaching of writing is too inconsistent. Teachers are starting to plan more lessons which successfully develop pupils' skills and provide wider opportunities for pupils to apply these skills to different types of writing. Pupils are doing this increasingly in other subjects such as science, history and geography. However, this is not yet well developed across all year groups.
- On occasions, teachers' subject knowledge in subjects other than English and mathematics is too limited. In science for example, in some classes weaker staff subject knowledge is not enabling pupils to make the progress of which they are capable. Pupils are not routinely accessing the full range of vocabulary and scientific knowledge that they require to make good progress.
- Where teaching, learning and assessment are stronger, teachers are planning tasks at an appropriate level of challenge, which helps pupils to learn better. For example, pupils are being given more frequent opportunities in mathematics to develop fluency, solve problems and apply what they know. This is supporting pupils to practise and extend their knowledge and understanding. Although there are inconsistencies across year groups, pupils' books show that progress in mathematics is stronger than previously.
- Phonics provision has improved since the previous inspection. Staff are receiving effective training and lessons are now increasingly helping pupils to make better progress, particularly with their early reading development. There has been a successful focus on reading throughout the school and now pupils are reading more often and more widely. This was further confirmed when inspectors heard pupils read during lessons and observations. The youngest children and pupils applied their knowledge of phonics well and used it to help them read, spell and check their own writing.
- The focus on reading is successfully improving the teaching of reading across the school. The school's agreed delivery of the English curriculum includes a specific concentration on comprehension skills followed by pupils' exploration of texts. This is routinely encouraging pupils to read and delve deeper into what text means. As a result, pupils are refining their strategies to improve their reading, deepening their understanding of what they read and, consequently, improving their reading skills.

- The more accurate identification of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities is enabling staff to target additional support in lessons, individually and to small groups. Pupils' current books demonstrate that this focused work is resulting in better progress in reading, writing and mathematics.
- The positive relationships that staff have established with pupils are a strength of the school. As a result, pupils show respect and demonstrate that they want to learn in lessons. Pupils routinely use the prompts and reminders displayed in classrooms to help them with their learning. Teachers celebrate and promote achievement through a high level of encouragement and displays of the pupils' work, including, for example, showing pupils how well they are writing over time on 'writing walls'.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Underpinned by the Christian ethos of the school and through assemblies and classroom teaching, pupils are taught about equality and being inclusive of others, regardless of their background. Pupils have a clear understanding of important values. This is preparing them well for their adult life.
- Pupils have opportunities to develop responsibility in a number of roles across the school, including helping out at lunchtimes with specific jobs and contributing to whole-school decisions through the school council. Pupils were proud to represent the school on a recent visit to Chelmsford Cathedral. Older pupils said: 'The younger children look up to us, they like us and when we see them doing something good we give them a high 5 and they feel proud they have done well.'
- Pupils learn effective skills and strategies to improve their personal, social and emotional development. Leaders' work in this respect has significantly improved the behaviour of pupils. Lessons, assemblies and the wider curriculum opportunities help pupils to understand British values. For example, during the biannual 'what it means to be British' week, pupils explore diversity, tolerance, respect and empathy. This enables pupils to demonstrate respect for others and listen attentively to different views during discussions.
- The school's work to raise pupils' aspirations and to help them develop their attitudes towards achieving well is making a positive difference. Pupils speaking to the inspectors talked enthusiastically about their 'dream job' when asked about their future.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Behaviour across the school has improved significantly since the previous inspection. Most pupils behave well both in lessons and around the school. Pupils and staff confirm that while behaviour was previously an issue, leaders have worked hard to successfully improve this aspect of the school's provision.

- Pupils' conduct around school in breaktimes and lunchtimes is positive, and pupils take responsibility for their own behaviour. Pupils adhere to the higher expectations set by staff, and have a clearer idea of rewards and consequences. During the inspection, pupils were observed playing together amicably. They are well looked after during these times.
- School behaviour records show that any incidents of inappropriate behaviour are closely monitored and have significantly reduced over time. If they occur, effective strategies are put in place to support the few pupils with challenging behaviour, so disruption to learning is minimised.
- Pupils spoken to during the inspection reflected honestly about how their past behaviour choices were not helping themselves or others and they were now 'different' because they 'understand the consequences'. Pupils want to be able to learn because they want to do well.
- Pupils' attendance has improved this year and persistent absence has fallen. This is because improving the attendance of pupils is a high priority. Leaders now reward good attendance and actively follow up absenteeism, ensuring that families are supported where appropriate. This is having a positive impact on reducing absences, particularly for the disadvantaged pupils.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- In 2017, Year 6 pupils made slow progress in reading, writing and mathematics from their starting points. As a result, pupils did not attain high enough standards. However, early indications of the unchecked 2018 outcomes for current Year 6 pupils would suggest that pupils have achieved well, and made stronger progress from their starting points.
- In the 2017 end of key stage 1 national assessments, a lower proportion of pupils than seen nationally attained the expected or better standards in reading, writing and mathematics. Inspection evidence shows that the attainment of most current key stage 1 pupils is improving in relation to age-related expectations.
- Leaders carefully and regularly monitor the progress that disadvantaged pupils are making, and subsequently, following the 'six week reviews', effective steps are swiftly taken to help them catch up. Current work in disadvantaged pupils' books shows signs of improvement in their progress. Although this is not consistently the case across all year groups, there is evidence to show that the difference between the disadvantaged pupils and their non-disadvantaged peers nationally is diminishing.
- Historically, most-able pupils did not attain as well as they were capable. This included most-able disadvantaged pupils. Due to the work of leaders to improve the quality of support, these pupils are starting to make stronger progress, and, from similar starting points, these most-able pupils have achieved better standards in 2018.
- The progress of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities is now more in line with that of pupils with similar starting points. This is because pupils respond well to the support they receive in class, in small groups, or on a one-to-one basis. The additional funding for pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities is being appropriately used to improve pupils' outcomes from their varying starting points.

- In the 2017 Year 1 phonics screening check, the proportion of pupils attaining the expected standard was in line with the national figure. Current pupils are making good progress in acquiring phonics skills and this is likely to be confirmed in the 2018 phonics screening check. This is because phonics is taught systematically and well, particularly in Year 1.
- Although past pupils have not been prepared well enough for secondary school, current pupils, who are starting to achieve higher standards throughout the school, are being better prepared for the next stages of their education.

Early years provision

Requires improvement

- Although improving, standards in the early years are not yet consistent enough to ensure that children make the progress of which they are capable.
- The majority of children start school with skills and knowledge slightly lower than usually found for their age. The proportion who attained a good level of development in 2017 was just above the national level. However, inspection evidence and the school's own assessment information show that children could, and should, be achieving better.
- The indoor and outside environment potentially provide a wide range of independent and directed activities to enable children to develop and practise their skills, knowledge and understanding. However, on occasions the activities planned are not specific enough to consistently meet children's needs from their starting points, taking into account the prior assessment information.
- There is too much inconsistency in the quality of adult intervention during activities. While the tasks are plentiful and often engaging, they sometimes lack specific purpose. During these times, adults can miss chances to develop, record and extend children's learning through modelling their expectations more clearly and by using questioning more effectively.
- The early years leader's enthusiasm, commitment and work with the partnership school are helping to improve the quality of the early years at the school. This is beginning to contribute towards raising staff expectations, improving the accuracy of assessment and further developing the early years learning environment. Leaders know that they have more work to do to make sure that the curriculum consistently helps all children to achieve well from their starting points.
- Children in early years are confident in their environment. They demonstrate that they are ready to learn and show signs of wanting to do more. Children enthusiastically talked to inspectors and were inquisitive and eager to carry out tasks. For example, one child was very excited when carrying out an adult-led task, wanting to get it finished because he wanted to 'go outside to sail the boat I built this morning'.
- Children respond positively to adults, and their relationships with adults are trusting and respectful. Routines are well established and children behave appropriately. This contributes to ensuring that children feel happy and confident in talking about their learning and wanting to do well.
- The early years leader is working hard to establish positive working partnerships with parents. Parents generally respond well, sharing their children's achievements with the

'wow' stickers. Parents of Reception children were positive about the start their children receive at Southminster. As one parent, summarising others' views, said, 'Children love coming here and are safe and happy.'

- Staff are fully trained in all aspects of keeping children safe, in line with the reviewed whole-school policies and current statutory guidance. As a result, adults provide a caring, nurturing environment, ensuring that children are safe and enjoy their early school experience.

School details

Unique reference number	140180
Local authority	Essex
Inspection number	10046578

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

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	153
Appropriate authority	The governing board
Chair	Mike Simmonds
Executive Headteacher	Pauline Ward
Telephone number	01621 772409
Website	www.southminsterschool.co.uk
Email address	admin@southminster.essex.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	12–13 October 2016

Information about this school

- Southminster Church of England Primary School converted to become an academy on 1 November 2013. It is sponsored by The Diocese of Chelmsford Vine Schools Trust.
- The executive headteacher leads both Southminster Church of England Primary School and St Cedd's Church of England Primary School. The schools work together sharing some subject leadership roles and the same governing board.
- Southminster is a smaller than averaged-sized primary school, with one class per year group from Reception to Year 6.
- Almost all pupils are of White British origin and almost all speak English as their first language.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils is similar to the national average.
- The proportion of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities is similar to the national average.

- The school met floor standard in 2017. These are the minimum expectations, set by the government, for pupils' attainment and progress.

Information about this inspection

- Learning was observed in all classes, jointly with the executive headteacher and the head of school. Leaders also joined inspectors to scrutinise a wide range of children's and pupils' books.
- The lead inspector met with the trust chief executive officer, held a meeting with the chair of the local governing board and held a telephone conversation with a representative from the Diocese of Chelmsford.
- Inspectors met with the head of school, who is also the curriculum leader, the assistant headteacher, who is also the special needs coordinator, and the mathematics and English subject leaders.
- Inspectors observed other aspects of the school's work such as an assembly, small-group work and the forest school provision.
- A wide range of parental views were scrutinised and evaluated. Inspectors spoke with parents at the start of the school day. The lead inspector arranged and held a formal parent meeting on the second day of the inspection. Additionally, the lead inspector had nine telephone conversations with parents who could not attend the parent meeting and made a request to speak to the inspection team. In addition to this, inspectors took account of 59 responses to the Ofsted free-text system and 38 responses to the Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View. Inspectors also took account of the school's most recent parent view survey undertaken in March 2018.
- Inspectors took account of 16 paper responses to the staff questionnaire, four responses to the Ofsted electronic staff survey and spoke with a cross-section of staff to discuss their views of the school and how they have been supported. Additionally, inspectors organised and held formal meetings with teachers and support staff.
- The inspectors examined a wide range of documents, including information about pupils' progress, school improvement plans, information about teachers' performance and external views of the school. They reviewed the contents of the school's website and closely scrutinised records relating to behaviour, attendance and safeguarding.

Inspection team

Tracy Fielding, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Jo Farrow

Ofsted Inspector

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