

Sheering Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School

The Street, Sheering, Bishop's Stortford, CM22 7LU

Inspection dates

23-24 January 2014

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		Requires improvement	3
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

- Teaching is not consistently good enough for the rapid progress needed for pupils to make up for past underachievement. As a result, pupils' achievement requires improvement.
- Teachers' planning does not consistently pinpoint precisely how to move learning forward for all pupils. This can lead to pupils losing interest in lessons or not gaining enough from their work.
- Work set can be too easy for the more able pupils because expectations of what they can achieve are not high enough across all classes.
- Pupils make slower progress in writing than in reading or mathematics because lessons do not always grab their imaginations and opportunities are not provided to develop their skills in other subjects.
- Teachers are not secure enough in teaching phonics (letters and the sounds they make) to move learning forward rapidly for all pupils.
- Activities to develop wider reading skills do not always interest or motivate pupils sufficiently.
- Leaders and governors have until recently been slow in bringing about improvements in teaching and pupils' achievement.

The school has the following strengths

- The headteacher has quickly set about identifying what needs to be done to improve the school and has drawn up clear plans for this to be achieved.
- Governors have provided the school with stability during a time of staff changes and supported school leadership in eliminating any inadequate teaching.
- Procedures for safeguarding pupils are good and they say they feel safe in school. Their attendance is above average.
- The guidance provided by marking and other feedback is giving pupils a much clearer picture of how well they are doing and where improvements can be made.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed 10 lessons, six of which were seen together with the headteacher.
- Meetings were held with groups of pupils, school staff and members of the governing body, including the chair, and a representative from the local authority.
- The inspector took account of the 27 responses to the online parent questionnaire (Parent View) and held informal discussions with parents at the start of the school day.
- The inspector observed the school's work and looked at a number of documents including the school's own information on the pupils' current progress, planning and monitoring documentation, records relating to behaviour and attendance, and documents relating to safeguarding.
- The inspector also took account of the 19 responses to the staff questionnaire.

Inspection team

Martin Beale, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is much smaller than most primary schools.
- Almost all pupils are from White British backgrounds.
- The school receives pupil premium funding for an average proportion of the pupils. This is extra government funding given to schools to support pupils known to be eligible for free school meals.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported through school action is well-below average. The proportion supported through school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is below average. Their needs are varied.
- More pupils than in most other primary schools join or leave part-way through their primary education.
- The headteacher was appointed at the start of term and had been in post for two weeks by the start of the inspection. The school had been led by the deputy headteacher during the previous term. Two of the four class teachers were new to the school in September 2013.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in English and mathematics.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the proportion of good and better teaching so that learning improves by:
 - making sure that all staff raise their expectations of what pupils can achieve
 - planning and teaching lessons that enable pupils of all ages and abilities in each class to move forward more rapidly in their learning
 - making sure teachers use methods and provide activities that challenge the more able and make them think
 - developing staff expertise in Reception in moving learning forward when children are working on activities they have initiated.
- Increase progress in writing by:
 - adopting methods and selecting texts that interest and motivate pupils more
 - ensuring that children in Reception can develop their writing through a wider range of activities
 - redesigning topics so that they include opportunities for pupils to practise and develop their writing in a range of subjects.
- Increase progress in reading by:
 - implementing a training programme to extend staff expertise in teaching phonics
 - ensuring that activities in reading sessions are planned more carefully to develop wider reading skills.
- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management by:
 - making sure that extra support given to groups and individuals is having the intended effect on their progress
 - enabling subject leaders to make a full contribution to checking on teaching and pupils' progress in their areas.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- The pupils' achievement is not yet consistently good across the school because they are not making sufficient progress in mathematics, reading and writing to eliminate previous underachievement. Pupils are not doing as well as they could because expectations are not high enough. Few pupils make accelerated progress. This applies particularly to more able pupils. Later arrivals achieve at a similar level to those who spend their whole school careers at Sheering.
- Year 6 test results rose in 2013 to a broadly average level, although several pupils did not make the progress expected across Key Stage 2, particularly in writing. This pattern remains for the current Year 6, although many of this group are making rapid progress in their reading.
- Children enter Reception with skills typical for their age. Most are curious and keen to learn, but their achievement requires improvement. This is because adults do not always move learning on sufficiently when children are working on activities by themselves or with others.
- Pupils do not have enough opportunity to develop their writing, either in ways that stimulate their imaginations or within other subjects. There are too few opportunities to encourage Reception children to develop their writing through the various activities provided.
- Progress in mathematics is not yet good, although pupils are beginning to deepen their understanding by applying their skills when solving problems or undertaking practical activities.
- Results of the phonics screening check for Year 1 pupils improved in 2013 but were still below average. Progress currently is not rapid enough because of shortcomings in teaching expertise. Many pupils are keen readers who read widely and can talk about their favourite authors and why they enjoy their books. Others are less motivated and not always supported at home to read regularly. Furthermore, some of the activities in reading sessions do not focus sufficiently on developing wider skills such as comprehension and research.
- The progress of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs varies considerably. Some individual pupils are making rapid progress because support is designed well to meet their needs. Progress for others is slower because lessons are not always planned carefully enough to meet their individual targets.
- Those eligible for support through the pupil premium make similar progress to that of others, although often with small numbers in each year group. The gap between their test results and those of others in Year 6 in 2013 was narrower than seen nationally and amounted to six months in mathematics and one term in each of reading and writing. This gap is negligible in most other year groups.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- Not enough teaching is good enough for pupils to make good and sustained progress over time and make up for slower progress in the past. Teachers' expectations of what pupils are capable of are not always high enough. This is because they do not use all that they know about each pupil to plan lessons that move everyone's learning forward at a good pace. More able pupils are not always made to think for themselves because work is too easy or they have to waste time listening to explanations of work they already understand. At other times, less able pupils

become confused because teachers' explanations are of work beyond their current understanding.

- The adults working in Reception do not get enough out of children when they are working on activities by themselves or in groups. This is because adults do not get involved in the children's learning by posing questions to make them think more or suggesting other avenues they might explore. As a result, time can be wasted and learning can lack sufficient direction.
- Where teaching is at its best, particularly in Years 5 and 6, interesting practical activities and role-play capture the pupils' imaginations and move their learning forward well. In these lessons teaching assistants make a positive contribution because they are well-briefed and know when to intervene to move the pupils' learning forward.
- Changes to marking over the last term are giving pupils a much clearer picture of what they can do to improve their work. This is leading to pupils taking responsibility for correcting work, making sure similar errors do not recur and building their teacher's suggestions into future work.
- The school's leadership has initiated suitable action to bring about improvements in the quality of teaching. It is too early for these to have had a strong enough impact on the pupils' progress, although evidence is of an improving picture.

The behaviour and safety of pupils

requires improvement

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement. Following parental consultation, the school reviewed and changed its procedures for managing behaviour. By all accounts, this has led to a calmer school, particularly at playtimes, although some boisterous play remains which can lead to some pupils falling out with each other. Pupils are generally polite and show respect for adults and visitors.
- Not all pupils have developed a positive approach to their learning. A small but noteworthy number lose concentration at times when lessons are not interesting or challenging. By contrast, most pupils are keen, interested and want to do well. Most pupils work together well in pairs or groups, amicably sharing roles or discussing ideas. Attendance rose last year and is above average.
- Pupils enjoy the responsibilities they are given, including acting as representatives on the school council. Many happily take responsibility for helping newcomers to settle into school as quickly as possible.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. Safeguarding arrangements are secure and rigorously implemented. Pupils are taught how to stay safe, such as when using the internet. Pupils learn to recognise bullying and say that any rare incidents are dealt with quickly by staff.

The leadership and management

requires improvement

- The school has not dealt effectively with issues from the last inspection because the many staff changes have slowed the momentum for change. The pupils' achievement is only marginally higher and teaching still requires improvement. Most subject leaders have yet to become fully effective as they are very new in post, although they are receiving training in their role through coaching from the deputy headteacher.

- Prior to the start of the academic year, the school's engagement with the local authority had been limited. However, this has changed and become more effective by placing individual teachers on training to improve their teaching and the school on a programme to help it become good.
- School leaders keep a careful eye on the progress of each pupil so support programmes can be put in place. This includes small group work and counselling sessions for those eligible for support through the pupil premium. However, this has not led to pupils making consistently good progress.
- Topics add interest to the pupils' learning and are supported by educational visits such as to The Imperial War Museum for the World War Two topic in Years 5 and 6. However, the school has decided to redesign them as insufficient attention is placed on developing key skills such as writing. Teamwork and an understanding of other religions and cultures are promoted well through assemblies and events such as 'Diwali day'. The new sports funding is being used well to raise staff expertise and is leading to greater participation by pupils in clubs and competitive sports.
- The building blocks for success are more securely in place as a result of the efforts of school leaders since the last inspection. Inadequate teaching has been eliminated and training programmes started to move more teaching to a consistently good level. The new headteacher has quickly identified many of the barriers that have slowed the pupils' progress and is raising expectations by setting more challenging targets for pupils and staff.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors plan over the long term, such as making an appointment of headteacher only when the right candidate was available. They maintain their expertise through regular training including in understanding assessment data. This enables them to question school leaders carefully over test results and internal data so they are able to inform discussions about priorities for improvement. They rightly identify writing as a major concern and area for action. Governors are quite aware that teaching has required improvement and understand the action taken by the headteachers to eradicate inadequate performance. This has included only rewarding staff where their work leads to at least good pupil progress. They maintain a sharp eye on finances and through this were able to extend the buildings and now fund a redevelopment of the playground. They have become astute at checking the impact of intervention programmes and researched carefully how the pupil premium is allocated in other schools.

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	115099
Local authority	Essex
Inspection number	430745

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary Controlled
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	105
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Linda Ainsworth
Headteacher	Lorna Brittain
Date of previous school inspection	12 July 2012
Telephone number	01279 734210
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Email address	admin@sheering.essex.sch.uk

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