

# Inspection of a good school: Sheering Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School

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

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Inspection dates:

17 December 2019

## Outcome

Sheering Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School continues to be a good school.

However, inspectors have some concerns that standards may be declining, as set out below.

## What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are happy at this small, friendly school. Everyone gets on well together. Pupils and parents and carers feel that they are part of a caring school community. Pupils enjoy a range of subjects as well as extra-curricular activities. Pupils are well cared for by staff.

The school's curriculum does not prepare pupils enough for their future learning. Pupils do not achieve as well as they should in all subject areas.

Behaviour is generally good. There is a calm and friendly atmosphere around the school. Some older pupils act as prefects, setting a good example to others.

Most teachers have high expectations of pupils. At times when this is not the case, pupils are not as focused or attentive in all their lessons. This results in some pupils not following the behaviour expectations and therefore not trying their best.

Pupils feel safe in school. They know they can approach any adult in school and they will help them with any worries or concerns. Bullying is rare. If it does happen, adults deal with it quickly and effectively. One parent said, 'Everyone is kind and they all get on so well together.'

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

Leaders make sure that pupils learn the full range of subjects from the national curriculum. Leaders enrich learning by asking teachers to make use of the local environment when planning lessons. Recently, other new approaches have been introduced, for example, using 'big questions' to guide teachers when planning lessons.

However, learning does not always follow a logical sequence. For example, in history, some of the work planned did not help pupils to answer the 'big question' about why the Romans were so powerful. Also, work in pupils' books shows that pupils are misunderstanding important historical information.

Leaders have not planned the curriculum with enough care. The knowledge that pupils will be learning, and how their understanding will build up year on year, are not clear. Leaders' plans for school improvement are not sufficiently focused on the need to improve curriculum planning and the sequence of learning.

Curriculum information on the school's website is out of date. As a result, parents do not have enough up-to-date information about what pupils are learning.

In mathematics, learning includes plenty of work on arithmetic and calculations. Older pupils know their times tables well, and younger children are skilfully introduced to numbers and counting in Reception. Pupils' books are well presented, in a style agreed by all teachers. This is supported by practical work such as, for example, marking out angles on a table. However, there are not enough opportunities for pupils to solve mathematical problems or use reasoning skills. Hardly any work of this type has been undertaken during the autumn term. As a result, some pupils are not making as much progress as they should. This means that the mathematics curriculum is not as effective in helping pupils to achieve well.

Children settle quickly into the Reception class because transition activities are carefully planned. Effective teaching ensures that the children get off to a good start and make strong progress. Adults plan learning activities that build on the children's knowledge and interests. Children's confidence and perseverance develop well in early years. Adults plan activities thoughtfully to give children plenty of opportunities to practise what they have learned.

Reading is a priority from the start of Reception. Adults are well trained to help younger children learn their sounds quickly and get them reading straight away. Phonics is well taught throughout Reception and key stage 1.

Pupils enjoy reading and listening to stories read by their teachers. Weaker readers have extra support to help them catch up quickly. Reading lessons follow a consistent approach in all classes, which is effective because pupils get regular opportunities to practise their comprehension skills and to develop their vocabulary. Pupils enjoy reading challenges, choosing more difficult books each term including texts such as 'Coyote Summer' and 'Escape from Shangri-La', which further extend and develop their vocabulary.

The small number of disadvantaged pupils achieve in line with their peers. This is because leaders use additional funding effectively, and make sure pupils do not miss out on additional opportunities, for example, clubs and school activities.

Teachers and teaching assistants adapt work so that pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) can access the curriculum. Many parents are very pleased with this support.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Pupils feel safe because of the caring nature of staff. Adults know how to recognise the signs and how to make a referral if pupils may be at risk of harm. Staff are well trained and they understand how to report their concerns using the school's processes and systems. Checks to make sure that adults are suitable to work in school are thorough.

## **What does the school need to do to improve?**

### **(Information for the school and appropriate authority)**

- In some subjects, the steps to help pupils understand more and remember more are not well sequenced. Leaders have not focused on the prior knowledge pupils need to learn new ideas and concepts. Leaders need to ensure that teachers understand how to plan lessons in a logical sequence, and that teachers quickly address pupils' misconceptions.
- Where teaching is weaker, leaders must quickly bring about improvements by improving expectations, ensuring work is well suited to pupils' needs and improving behaviour management skills.
- In mathematics, leaders need to provide training for teachers to improve the use of reasoning and problem solving, in order to deepen pupils' understanding.
- Leaders should improve the quality of the school's development planning to ensure that there are clearly defined actions and monitoring arrangements in place and the impact of leaders' actions is checked and regularly updated. This should include ensuring that the school website contains all the necessary statutory information and that progress on improving the curriculum and the quality of education is kept under close review.

## **Background**

When we have judged a school to be good we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains good. This is called a section 8 inspection of a good school or non-exempt outstanding school. We do not give graded judgements on a section 8 inspection. However, if we find some evidence that the school could now be better than good or that standards may be declining, then the next inspection will be a section 5 inspection. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the section 8 inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will convert the section 8 inspection to a section 5 inspection immediately.

This is the first section 8 inspection since we judged the school to be good in April 2016.

## 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 Ofsted Parent View information 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 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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	115099
<b>Local authority</b>	Essex
<b>Inspection number</b>	10110318
<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary controlled
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4 to 11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	105
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair of governing body</b>	Steve Townsend
<b>Headteacher</b>	Lorna Brittain
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.sheeringschool.org.uk">www.sheeringschool.org.uk</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	12–13 April 2016

## Information about this school

- Sheering Church of England Primary School is a Church of England voluntary-controlled school located in the Diocese of Chelmsford. The religious character of the school was inspected under section 48 of the Education Act 2005 in December 2017 and was judged to be good.
- The school is much smaller than the average-sized school.
- The majority of pupils are of White British heritage.
- The proportion of pupils with SEND is higher than average.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils is lower than average.

## Information about this inspection

- As part of this inspection, we met with the headteacher, acting deputy headteacher and curriculum leaders. We also met with other teachers, office staff and pupils.
- I held a telephone conversation with the chair of governors and met with a representative from the local authority.
- We gathered the views of parents on the playground before school.

- To inspect the school's safeguarding arrangements, we spoke to the designated safeguarding leader, members of staff, parents and pupils. We checked the single central record and a sample of safeguarding records.
- We observed playtime and lunchtime and spoke to pupils about their school experiences.
- Reading, mathematics and history were considered as part of this inspection. We spoke to curriculum leaders, visited lessons, carried out work scrutinies and met with teachers and pupils to learn about the quality of education.

### **Inspection team**

Nick Rudman, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Tessa Holledge

Her Majesty's Inspector

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