

# Ridgewell Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School

Church Lane, Ridgewell, Halstead, Essex CO9 4SA

## Inspection dates

22–23 November 2016

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

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is an inadequate school

- Safeguarding is ineffective. Leaders and governors have not demonstrated that they understand the national statutory requirements for keeping pupils safe. These weaknesses compromise the quality of the school's leadership and pupils' welfare at the school.
- The record of recruitment checks on staff, (single central record) and the process of employing staff do not reflect the most recent statutory guidance. Consequently, leaders have not ensured that all the staff that they employ are thoroughly vetted before they begin their employment at the school.
- Systems and practices for keeping pupils safe are not rigorous. While parents say their children are safe and pupils report that they feel safe in the school, governors do not check the systems and practices rigorously enough to ensure that all concerns are addressed appropriately.
- The school's assessment procedures and practices are not fit for purpose. Although published information, including in early years, suggests that pupils make good progress, it is not clear that their starting points are measured accurately.
- Senior and middle leaders do not check and evaluate routinely the progress of all pupils in all subjects. Consequently, leaders do not know when pupils are not making the progress that they should to achieve the higher standards.
- Leaders have not supported teachers well enough in the past to have high expectations about what pupils can achieve. Recent action by new leaders has yet to have an impact on ensuring that teachers plan activities which are well tailored to the abilities of pupils.

### The school has the following strengths

- Pupils are encouraged to reflect on their own beliefs and understand how this influences their daily lives.
- Pupils behave well. They are polite, courteous and supportive of one another.
- Leaders use their additional funding effectively. Disadvantaged pupils make good progress in their learning. Their performance catches up with that of their peers nationally over time.

## Full report

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.

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

- Urgently put in place all necessary safeguarding arrangements to keep pupils safe by:
  - undertaking all statutory recruitment checks prior to the appointment of staff
  - making sure that the single central record of checks on the suitability of staff is compliant with statutory expectations, is maintained accurately, and is reviewed carefully by leaders
  - taking responsibility for regularly reviewing and updating the school's child protection policy and other associated systems, so that they meet the requirements set out in the most up-to-date statutory guidance
  - training staff to understand their responsibilities and statutory accountabilities relating to the safety of children
  - ensuring that all staff use their training and school guidance in their everyday work to remain vigilant about pupils' safety.
- Improve the quality of leadership and management by:
  - ensuring that the assessment of pupils' abilities is accurate and checked by leaders
  - ensuring that leaders regularly check pupils' progress from their starting points so that they can evaluate whether pupils are making rapid enough progress to the higher standards
  - ensuring that staff understand the school's chosen assessment system and apply it consistently
  - improving pupils' performance in all subjects, so that more pupils are achieving the higher standards of which they are capable at the end of each key stage
  - ensuring that teaching assistants are given appropriate guidance so that their hard work is used effectively.
- Improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment by:
  - supporting the teaching staff to understand assessment and how to plan for higher expectations of pupils, so that more pupils achieve the higher standards
  - eradicating the inconsistencies in the quality of teaching.

An external review of governance should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

The school may not appoint newly qualified teachers to its staff.

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management

### Inadequate

- Leadership and management are inadequate because the monitoring and actions that leaders and governors take to keep pupils safe in the school are weak.
- Leaders do not undertake the appropriate safeguarding checks on their staff. Staff responsible for administering the single central record were unaware of the need to check that staff have not been prohibited from teaching. Furthermore, statutory requirements have not been met in regard to the safer recruitment of new staff.
- Safeguarding record-keeping and systems in place are not rigorous enough. Although there is evidence that the new leaders have reviewed the format of the forms, the system is not always being followed by staff. Consequently, concerns about pupils are not always being shared with the designated lead teacher for safeguarding and therefore pupils are at risk.
- The new executive headteacher questioned the school's previous assessment information. Although a new assessment system is starting to be introduced, it has not had sufficient impact on the progress pupils are making. Leaders cannot confidently confirm that the assessment information is correct. Furthermore, leaders and teachers do not know when pupils are falling behind in their work and cannot provide extra help for them to catch up.
- Subject leaders are not able to demonstrate that they are positively influencing the progress being made in their area of leadership. They have not been allocated dedicated time, training and support to undertake their roles effectively.
- The curriculum does not support pupils to gain an in-depth understanding of different subjects, such as science, art, geography and history. Although leaders ensure that pupils study a range of subjects and are involved in trips and extra-curricular activities, pupils' learning is not extended sufficiently. As a result, pupils are not well prepared for their next stage in learning.
- Pupils do not have enough opportunities to apply their literacy or numeracy skills in different contexts or subject areas. Consequently, new learning is not practised in different contexts and skills are not embedded.
- Effective use has been made of the additional sport premium to fund a physical education (PE) specialist. This is encouraging pupils' participation in sport, extra-curricular clubs and inter-school competitions.
- Pupils are taught successfully how to be good citizens, and the value of their role in the community. Leaders ensure that the teaching of values supports pupils to understand the importance of equality, respect and faith. Pupils use these teachings throughout the school day, as shown by the utmost respect that they show to each other and adults.
- Leaders ensure that pupils learn about other faiths and how it is important to value the diversity in British society and the wider world. The recent Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) report emphasises the effective work that leaders undertake in this area.

- The new executive headteacher has accurately identified those areas most in need of improvement. She has worked with leaders to devise an appropriate, succinct school development plan. However, there has not been enough time to ascertain what difference the actions taken so far are making in improving teaching and learning, and raising further the achievement of all pupils.
- The special educational needs coordinator has effective processes for evaluating and supporting the very small proportion of pupils who have special education needs and/or disabilities, or are disadvantaged. Consequently, the pupils are achieving well. However, teaching assistants do not work sufficiently with other pupils, for example the most able. As a result, additional adults in the classroom do not effectively support all pupils routinely to make the progress of which they are capable.
- The school's website did not meet statutory requirements prior to the inspection. The school's child protection policy was a year out of date and the school had not reported the most recent 2016 results. Following a local authority visit a day before the inspection, the website information has now been updated and is compliant.

### **Governance of the school**

- Governors do not sufficiently understand their statutory duties, and have not taken the necessary steps to ensure that pupils are safe in the school. Governors exhibit a lack of awareness about the most up-to-date guidance in safeguarding. They have not ensured that policies, protocols and training of staff are effective. Equally, the checks that governors have undertaken around safeguarding, especially on the appropriateness of staff employed by the school, have been cursory and have not identified the serious flaws in the school's safeguarding and recruitment procedures.
- Despite regular visits, governors have an overgenerous view of the school's effectiveness. They rely too heavily on the information provided by leaders. Although they challenge leaders, they do not check to ensure that their concerns are taken seriously. Consequently, they do not have an accurate enough view on the quality of assessment, teaching or safeguarding.
- Since January 2016, governance has improved after a period of turbulence in both leadership and governance. The local authority has supported the governing body by providing a national lead in governance to support the training of governors. However, this support has yet to have enough of an impact so that governors can independently and rigorously challenge leaders to make a real difference to pupils' achievement and safety.
- Governors are using their expertise to ensure that the additional funding that the school receives is being used effectively. The funding for the small proportion of disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is being used appropriately to support pupils, mainly through well-planned, targeted intervention.

### **Safeguarding**

- The arrangements for safeguarding are not effective.
- Leaders do not undertake all of the basic statutory checks that they should on the new staff that they appoint. Consequently, they are not taking every precaution to keep pupils safe.

- Leaders do not ensure that their checks on staff when they are recruited are well kept and maintained. Leaders and governors are careless in their quality assurance of this work.
- The training for staff around safeguarding has not been systematic or rigorous. Consequently, although staff have some understanding of their statutory responsibilities, they are not showing that they are all clear on the referral procedures in the school. Leaders cannot be sure that staff are referring all concerns about pupils' safety. Equally, inspection evidence found examples of concerns recorded about pupils' safety that the designated safeguarding leader was not aware of. Consequently, these concerns were not referred appropriately either within the school or to an external agency.
- Pupils are taught how to stay safe both online and in school through the curriculum. Pupils talk about how they are taught to be safe with tools when undertaking their 'forest schools' work. Pupils feel safe and believe that staff will deal with their concerns appropriately. Pupils also say that there are very few incidents of bullying or poor behaviour.
- Parents feel that the school is a safe place for their children. They are effusive in their praise for leaders. However, this does not detract from the serious safeguarding omissions that leaders and governors have allowed to occur.

### Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

### Requires improvement

- Teachers are working hard; however, the lack of training they have received means that teaching is still too varied across the school and requires improvement. Although published information about pupils' progress and attainment, especially at key stage 2 is positive, pupils' work indicates that many pupils are simply repeating tasks that they can already do. Consequently, the underachievement of many pupils is being masked. Many pupils could achieve much more.
- Too often, there is a mismatch between planned activities and the needs of the high proportion of most-able pupils. Teachers underestimate the ability of the pupils. Teachers' questions are sometimes unfocused and poorly attuned to the intended learning for pupils. Such weaknesses lead to pupils not learning as much as they could in their lesson time.
- Teachers do not routinely use the assessment information they have to plan learning that is linked well enough to what pupils already know, and can do. Teachers place too much emphasis on the activities that pupils complete, rather than on what they will learn from completing the tasks. Pupils' current workbooks, and those provided by the school from the last academic year, indicate that there is too much work that is too easy, which results in pupils completing activities without learning anything new.
- The quality of pupils' writing and how they apply their writing skills across the curriculum is not well enough developed. Staff have made writing a key focus and the amount of writing that pupils undertake is increasing, especially at key stage 2. However, there is little evidence of pupils applying the skills they are learning across different subjects. Pupils write often and do regularly practise spelling, grammar and punctuation skills. However, some of the tasks lack purpose and do not help pupils to

make better progress in their writing. For example, in one class, pupils wrote out a selection of words all in upper case letters and then repeated this exercise writing the same words out, but in lower case letters.

- Pupils' books demonstrate that there are many opportunities for pupils to practise calculation and that they are competent when applying their skills to problem solving. However, it is clear that pupils do not make the progress they should because, on many occasions, they receive work that they have already shown they can do well. One pupil said that he would 'like the teacher to give me more challenge. The three challenges are just changing the number of digits I use and I can already do it.' The pupil then showed the inspector similar work, using the same skills he had completed previously. This view was confirmed by older pupils when they met the inspector.
- Disadvantaged pupils, and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, learn well in lessons because of the intensive individualised support they receive. Teaching assistants work effectively with small groups of pupils and the special educational needs coordinator monitors pupils closely. However, adults are not deployed effectively to support other pupils in lessons. Consequently, not all pupils are supported consistently well enough to make the most of their learning time and achieve their full potential.
- Pupils read well. They read regularly in school and enjoy a range of books. Pupils can discuss their favourite authors and give reasons why they like them. Pupils can apply their phonic skills to read unfamiliar words and help them read text. Pupils use various strategies to do this, including thinking about the letter names and the sounds. The most able readers read fluently with expression and demonstrate how they use the text around unknown words to figure out what they might mean.
- Relationships between all adults and pupils are positive. Pupils participate and contribute to lessons enthusiastically. They know that their thoughts and contributions are considered and valued.

## Personal development, behaviour and welfare

## Inadequate

### Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is inadequate because safeguarding is ineffective.
- Leaders have not undertaken all the statutory checks on staff or ensured that safeguarding procedures reflect statutory guidance. Therefore, they are not taking all reasonable precautions to keep pupils safe.
- Although parents and pupils feel that staff take their concerns about safety seriously, staff training has not yet ensured that all staff are confident to use the school's safeguarding procedures to report concerns. Consequently, leaders cannot be confident that staff are reporting the concerns, or if they are vigilant enough about pupils' safety.
- According to pupils, bullying is not an issue at Ridgewell. Pupils and parents, and leaders' analysis all show a positive picture about this aspect of the school's work.

- Pupils are keen to learn. For example, pupils say that they enjoy the homework that they receive. Year 5 and 6 pupils say that the homework 'learning logs' help them to be creative and they wish it was the same type of learning in their classroom. One Year 5 pupil said that he particularly liked 'completing the project to design and make an Anderson shelter because we were free to do what we wanted with the work'.

## Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils are happy, friendly and caring. They behave well at breaktimes and lunchtimes, playing together sensibly. Pupils listen and respond to adults' instructions quickly and respectfully.
- When given the opportunity, pupils are enthusiastic to demonstrate their new learning articulately. For example, following a visit to Duxford, a group of Year 5 boys were eager to explain what they had learned. Pupils had gained incredible levels of specific knowledge about world war two planes from this experience. However, teachers do not sufficiently encourage this level of articulation and engagement, despite the obvious ability and willingness of pupils to participate at this higher level.
- Pupils are well mannered and eager to please. Even when teachers plan work that is too easy, or too hard, pupils sit patiently until the session has finished. Pupils commented that they 'have to just sit and wait until the teacher has finished and it can be boring, but it's important other children learn too'.
- Pupils enjoy coming to school. Attendance levels are consistently high. The number of pupils who are persistently absent has decreased since 2015 and lateness is rare.

## Outcomes for pupils

## Require improvement

- Leaders are not confident that the school's current assessment system is providing teachers with accurate starting points for pupils; nor is the system being routinely checked for its accuracy. Although the executive headteacher has recognised this and is making changes, too many pupils are not being challenged to achieve the highest standards that they are well capable of attaining.
- The outcomes for children in the early years, since the previous inspection, are too variable. Although leaders point to the small numbers of children on roll, the school has yet to ensure that children consistently access high-quality teaching and make strong enough progress from their individual starting points to be ready for Year 1.
- Since the previous inspection, pupils' achievement in key stage 1 has been variable. Leaders have not ensured that pupils have sustained consistently good outcomes year on year. Since 2011, the proportions of pupils that have achieved the national standards in reading, writing and mathematics have varied widely, often vying between being significantly below or significantly above the national average in each year. This is not a sustained trajectory of improvement or a picture of consistently good progress for pupils over time.
- The outcomes for pupils at key stage 2 show a more consistently positive picture of pupils' achievement. In 2016, under new measures, pupils made progress in reading,

writing and mathematics that was at least in line with national averages. However, although the most able pupils achieved the higher standards in reading, they did not achieve the higher standards in writing and mathematics.

- Results for the phonics screening check in 2016 were above the national average, and although these results have been a little irregular over previous years, they are consistently above the national average each year.
- Disadvantaged pupils, and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, are supported well to make good progress in their lessons and over time. However, they are such small cohorts that to identify their specific achievements would be inappropriate as it would identify the pupils individually.
- Pupils learn a broad range of subjects but only access writing, reading, mathematics and religious education in sufficient depth. The new 'topic leader' has a clear vision for what the curriculum should offer so that pupils are ready in all subject areas for their next stages in education, especially in science, history and geography. Leaders are working hard to establish better curriculum access and depth for pupils through, for example, the introduction of 'cultural passports'. However, this curriculum and associated assessment are still in their early stages of implementation. Leaders have only recently begun to evaluate pupils' progress in these other subject areas.

### Early years provision

### Requires improvement

- Reception children, year on year, start from slightly lower starting points than those typical for their age. Since the previous inspection, the proportion of children achieving a good level of development by the end of the year has been very inconsistent. In 2014, the proportion of pupils achieving a good level of development was significantly below the national average. Although the proportion rose in 2015, and 100% of children achieved a good level of development, this fell again in 2016. This is not a sustained good picture of achievement for children over time.
- Assessment is not yet well used by staff to ensure that children are making the progress that they should. While children choose activities, both inside and outdoors, adults are not deployed well enough to ensure that children are learning well in these activities. Equally, adults are not capturing what children say and do well enough. As a result, adults do not yet consistently have a clear picture of what children know and can do, and therefore cannot always plan to ensure that children make the consistent progress of which they are capable.
- Although the range and type of activities have improved, children still learn mainly from the adult-led activities. Adults are not yet supporting and intervening well enough during children's learning to develop their independence. Consequently, the activities that children access are not sufficiently demanding in order to quicken their progress. This is particularly so for the most able children.
- Leaders acknowledge that the transition between pre-school and Reception is not yet good enough in supporting children. The local authority is supporting the early years manager effectively to develop a more unified approach to create an early years unit. This work is in its infancy and it is too early to assess its impact.

- The newly appointed early years manager knows the strengths and weaknesses in the school's early years provision and has a clear plan for improvement. However, the leader requires more time before the effectiveness of these improvements can be measured.
- Behaviour is good. Children quickly learn routines. They move around the classroom safely and confidently. Children show they are polite and that they listen well to each other. For example, during the phonics session, children listened to each other when they had come back from finding words with the 'h' sound in them. Children also helped each other when their classmates made mistakes.
- Children's 'learning journeys' contain lots of details about what children do throughout the day. Parents are encouraged by the school to share what their child achieves at home. However, these journals are not being used sharply enough by staff to look at what children are learning and what they need to do next to make good progress.
- Children form positive relationships with all staff. Children's safety is a priority and consequently they are well supervised both in the classroom and outside.

## School details

Unique reference number	115142
Local authority	Essex
Inspection number	10001489

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	92
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Brian Vidler
Executive headteacher	Linda Buchanan
Telephone number	01440 785 364
Website	<a href="http://www.ridgewell.essex.sch.uk">http://www.ridgewell.essex.sch.uk</a>
Email address	<a href="mailto:admin@ridgewell.essex.sch.uk">admin@ridgewell.essex.sch.uk</a>
Date of previous inspection	19–20 October 2011

## Information about this school

- Ridgewell Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School is much smaller than the average primary school. Year on year, cohorts of pupils vary. There is a combined pre-school class and Reception class, and mixed Year 1/2, Year 3/4 and Year 5/6 classes.
- The majority of pupils are of White British heritage.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is just above the national average.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils (those who are supported by the pupil premium funding) is below average.
- In September 2016 there was a change to leadership. Currently there is an interim arrangement in place. There is a part-time executive headteacher who is also headteacher at Belchamp St Paul CofE VA Primary School. There are also two interim

heads of school.

- The school works alongside other local schools within the Colne Valley Consortium.
- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.

## Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed teaching and learning in all classes, jointly with the executive headteacher. Short visits were also made to all classrooms at various times to look at books.
- Meetings were held with the executive headteacher, the two heads of school, subject leaders and the early years manager. The inspector also met individually with the vice-chair of the governing body (who is a national leader of governance) and, as a group, members of the governing body, including the chair.
- The inspector met informally with pupils during their lessons and around the school. A group of pupils met with the inspector to talk about their views about the school and the inspector attended a whole-school assembly and heard pupils of different ages read.
- A scrutiny of some of the 2015/16 academic year books, and current pupils' work in all year groups, including mathematics, English, science and religious education (RE) books was undertaken. This was mostly carried out jointly with the executive headteacher.
- The school's own assessment information and a wide range of paperwork was scrutinised. This included records relating to the monitoring of the school's work by leaders, governing body minutes, pupils' attainment and progress, behaviour, attendance and safeguarding, and monitoring and evaluation documents. A range of information that was available on the school's website was evaluated.
- Views were taken account of from the 27 parent texts, and 30 responses made by parents to the Ofsted online questionnaire (Parent View). Additionally, inspectors looked at the nine pupils' views submitted on the online pupil survey, and the views expressed by 11 members of staff in response to the staff questionnaire.

## Inspection team

Tracy Fielding, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

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