

Folkestone St Mary's Church of England Primary Academy

Warren Road, Folkestone, Kent, CT19 6QH

Inspection dates

9–10 September 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected	
	This inspection:	Requires improvement	3
Leadership and management		Requires improvement	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement	3
Achievement of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Early years provision		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

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

- Pupils including the most able, do not make the progress that they should, particularly in mathematics and reading.
- By the end of Year 6, attainment in reading and mathematics is below that in writing.
- Phonics (the sounds that letters make) is not taught consistently well enough throughout the school; reading is not given high enough priority.
- Some teachers' expectations of pupils are too low and sometimes the work set in lessons for the most able pupils is too easy.
- The curriculum does not motivate the pupils enough to bring about rapid improvement in achievement.
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- Pupils are given too few opportunities to apply their mathematical skills in other subjects in order to deepen their understanding.
- Marking is inconsistent. Pupils get too few opportunities to act upon the guidance given by their teachers in order to improve their work.
- On occasions, teaching does not fully engage pupils. Their behaviour sometimes disrupts the learning for others and rates of progress slows.
- The role of subject leaders has not developed quickly enough for them to have sufficient impact on improving teaching and learning.
- The governing body has not challenged senior leaders enough or held them fully accountable for raising standards at the academy.

The school has the following strengths:

- Standards in writing are improving rapidly because it is promoted well in the academy.
- The quality of teaching in the Early Years is good and children make good progress.
- The support for disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is well led and managed.
- The academy's work to keep pupils safe is good.
- Pupils enjoy coming to the academy and attendance is above average.
- The new Principal gives clear direction to the work of the academy. Together with a team of committed senior leaders he is having a positive impact on staff morale and improving the standard of education.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed learning taught by 17 teachers across a range of subjects. Eight were observed jointly with the headteacher. Inspectors also looked closely at pupils' work with subject leaders.
- Inspectors talked with pupils and listened to some Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 pupils reading.
- Meetings were held with staff and two members of the governing body.
- Inspectors looked closely at school documentation, including minutes of meetings of the governing body, the academy's analysis of how well it is doing and its improvement plan. They reviewed documents relating to behaviour and safeguarding and the academy's data on pupils' progress.
- Inspectors took account of 28 responses from parents and carers recorded in the online questionnaire Parent View. They also had informal conversations with some parents and carers at the beginning of the school day.
- The inspectors took account of 37 responses to the staff questionnaire provided by Ofsted.

Inspection team

Gianni Bianchi, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Cliff Mainey

Additional Inspector

Alison Botarelli

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Folkestone St Mary's Church of England Primary Academy is larger than average in size. There are two classes in each of Reception to Year 6 and a Nursery.
- Folkestone St Mary's Church of England Primary Academy converted to become an academy on 1 March 2013. When its predecessor school, St. Mary's Church of England Primary School was last inspected by Ofsted, it was judged to be satisfactory.
- The proportion of pupils for whom the school receives the pupil premium (additional funding for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and children who are looked after) is above the national average.
- Nearly all pupils are White British.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported through school action is above average. The proportion supported at school action plus or of pupils who have a statement of special educational needs is in line with the national average.
- The academy meets the current floor standards, the government's minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- The current Principal took up post on 1 September 2014. Prior to this, the academy appointed an external consultant as acting Principal.
- The academy operates a breakfast club.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the teaching so that it is typically good or outstanding by:
 - increasing teachers' expectations of what the most able pupils can achieve and setting work that allows them to achieve the best they can
 - giving pupils regular opportunities to act upon the advice given to them in their teachers' marking so that they fully understand how to improve their work
 - teaching pupils the skills to make the correct choices in lessons about their behaviour and understand the consequences of their actions.
- Raise achievement, particularly in reading and mathematics, by:
 - ensuring that the quality of phonics teaching is consistently good so that rates of progress in reading match those in writing
 - giving reading a higher priority in the academy and fully developing pupils' love of reading
 - making sure that teachers plan more opportunities for pupils to apply their mathematical skills in a range of other subjects to deepen their understanding.
- Improve the leadership and management by:
 - ensuring the role of the subject leaders is fully developed so that they can check standards in their areas of responsibility
 - developing a curriculum which motivates and excites pupils and gives them more opportunities to practise and enhance their skills
 - making sure that the governing body rigorously challenges academy leaders to secure rapid improvements in pupils' achievement and teaching.

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

INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

The leadership and management

require improvement

- Since becoming an academy, there have been three acting Principals in quick succession. Over time, academy leaders and governors have not been vigilant in ensuring that all pupils have achieved well enough.
- Senior leaders check regularly on the quality of teaching, but they do not focus their evaluations precisely enough on the learning for different groups of pupils in lessons and in their books. This means that they do not follow up or resolve weaknesses in teaching rigorously enough.
- The academy is developing the role of subject leaders. However, subject leaders still do not play a full part in improving the academy, especially in checking and improving the quality of teaching in their subject areas. As a result, pupils' achievement varies between subjects.
- The leadership of teaching is not rigorous enough. Although there are sound procedures for managing staff performance and linking this to movement up the pay scale, this has not had enough impact on improving the overall quality of teaching.
- The ambitious new Principal has very quickly gained the confidence of staff and all are dedicated to making the necessary changes to increase progress rates.
- Prior to the Principal's appointment, the academy commissioned the support of an external consultant. This helped leaders and governors to gain an accurate view of the school's performance. Consequently, the latest improvement plans have a sharp focus on the correct priorities. This, together with improvements in attendance and standards in writing, indicates that the academy has the capacity to improve further.
- Pupils learn a range of subjects and topics which are enhanced with trips and links with schools in other countries. Subjects such as religious education, history and geography help pupils learn about other faiths and cultures. A good array of enrichment activities and daily assemblies promote tolerance and respect and contribute well to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. However, leaders have not yet developed the curriculum to improve achievement and give pupils more opportunities to apply their skills to real-life situations.
- Checks on the use of the primary school sports funding show that more pupils are taking part in a wider range of sports. The school is very proud to have won the 'tri-golf' competition. As well as making use of the expertise of sports coaches to support teaching, links with the local secondary school have enabled staff to extend their skills in sports such as swimming and handball.
- The large majority of parents, carers and staff are very positive about the work of the academy.
- All statutory requirements for safeguarding are met and systems are managed efficiently.

■ The governance of the school:

- Governors know standards at the academy require improvement. They understand academy data and how this compares with other schools nationally. Since the academy opened, they have developed a new management structure. Governors make checks on the progress of children in the Early Years and have recently gained a better understanding of the performance of different groups of pupils, including those eligible for the additional funding. However, they have not fully challenged the senior leaders rigorously enough to bring about rapid improvements in pupils' achievement and the quality of teaching. Despite this, they are committed to making the academy good and fully support the new Principal. They understand procedures for linking pay awards to the quality of teachers' work. Governors manage their budget effectively, including the additional funds for sport and the pupil premium. They know how the funds are allocated and the impact they are having on pupils' achievement.

The behaviour and safety of pupils

require improvement

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement. Too often work is not challenging enough for some pupils to become engrossed in their learning and they begin to chat about other things. This results in both them and others making less progress than they should.
- Most pupils are polite and well mannered. However, some pupils find it difficult to make the correct choices during lessons and their behaviour affects the learning of others. Some parents and carers shared the view that behaviour is not good.
- Rigorous systems for managing behaviour are in place and records show that behaviour has improved

over time. Exclusions are now rare and the academy has very effective systems in place for managing pupils' return to the academy.

- The academy's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. Pupils feel safe at school and relationships among pupils and staff are good.
- Pupils are aware of the different types of bullying, including how to keep themselves safe on the internet. Instances of bullying and racism are rare and those that do occur are dealt with effectively by staff. Discrimination is not tolerated in any form.
- Daily acts of collective worship give pupils time for reflection and to learn about safe and unsafe situations.
- Adults provide a high level of care for the pupils. They enjoy coming to school and attendance is currently above the national average.
- The well-attended breakfast club is well organised and provides pupils with a positive start to the school day.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- The quality of teaching requires improvement because pupils' progress over time has not been consistently good. This is because leaders do not always make sure that teaching is challenging enough to raise pupils' achievement.
- On occasions, the most able pupils do not make enough progress, as the work set is too easy and does not motivate them. This is because teachers do not have consistently high enough expectations of what pupils can achieve. As a result, too few pupils attain the highest levels by the end of Year 6.
- Teachers regularly mark pupils' work, but the quality varies across year groups. Some teachers do not give pupils enough time to act upon the advice given, and this slows their progress.
- Where learning is most effective, teachers regularly check the progress of pupils in lessons. For example in Year 1, the teacher noted that some pupils had not understood the concept of estimation during a mathematics lesson. Some effective questioning resulted in pupils gaining in confidence to attempt the task. Consequently, these pupils made faster rates of progress. However, this kind of practice is not found in all classes.
- Work in pupils' writing books shows that specific skills are being taught. Writing is promoted well within the school and pupils have many opportunities to write at length and apply these skills in the topics they study. As a result, standards in writing have improved. However, pupils are not given enough opportunities to develop and apply their mathematical skills in other subjects such as science.

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Pupils in Years 1 to 6 do not make rapid enough progress over time. However, rates of progress for Year 6 pupils has increased in writing. Their progress is slower in reading and mathematics.
- Standards pupils attained in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of Year 2 and Year 6 have been below the national average. However, provisional data from the 2014 national tests show both progress and attainment to be much improved, particularly in writing.
- The most able pupils do not make enough progress, particularly in reading and mathematics. Too often the work is not challenging enough and some do not reach the standards of which they are capable.
- Recent improvements in the quality of teaching have enabled pupils to make better progress. The schools' current data confirms this.
- The proportion of pupils reaching the expected level in the Year 1 phonics screening check improved in 2014. However, the teaching of phonics is inconsistent throughout the academy and some older pupils struggle to read difficult words. As a result, some do not reach the levels expected of them.
- Reading is not given a high enough priority. Teachers do not routinely encourage pupils to explore new authors and other types of literature. There are too few opportunities for pupils to read a wide variety of reading materials and enrich their enjoyment of reading, despite the school having a well-resourced library.
- Year 6 pupils eligible for the additional funding did not do as well as other pupils in the academy or nationally in 2013. Results show that they were a year behind their peers in mathematics and eight months behind in English. Provisional 2014 data show a much improved picture with pupils attaining similar levels to those of their peers in the academy and when compared nationally with the 2013 results.
- Academy data show that current pupils eligible for additional funding are making the same rates of progress as their peers and that the gap in attainment is narrowing. The academy uses the funding primarily to provide extra teaching support for pupils who need it and to reduce class sizes in Year 6.

- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs are making better progress than previously and in line with their classmates. They benefit from well-planned activities and good support from well-trained and skilled additional adults in the academy.
- Since the academy opened teachers are becoming more accountable for the progress pupils make. This ensures that everyone has an equal chance of success and is being prepared for secondary education. This includes pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds and those who speak English as an additional language.

The early years provision

is good

- Most children start school in Reception with skills that are typical for their age. Good teaching in the Nursery contributes to this. They make good progress so that by the time they start Year 1 they are confident learners. The very large majority have the skills and understanding expected at their age and some exceed these.
- Teaching meets children's needs and makes good use of outdoors as well as indoors. Children enjoy the lively approach by the adults that gives them the chance to explore their ideas and find things out for themselves. Teachers and teaching assistants use effective questioning to ensure that children are developing their early reading, writing and mathematical skills.
- Children behave well and are polite and courteous. They are actively encouraged to adopt safe play.
- Even though new to the role, the leaders of the early years know what is working well and what needs to be improved. They are highly motivated and have set ambitious targets for the year.

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	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. 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.

School details

Unique reference number	139130
Local authority	Kent
Inspection number	426537

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	450
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Belinda Stuart-Moonlight
Headteacher	Trevor North
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
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