

Inspection of Eastry Church of England Primary School

Cooks Lea, Eastry, Sandwich, Kent CT13 0LR

Inspection dates: 16–17 October 2019

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

The quality of education

Requires improvement

Behaviour and attitudes

Requires improvement

Personal development

Good

Leadership and management

Good

Early years provision

Requires improvement

Overall effectiveness at previous
inspection

Outstanding

What is it like to attend this school?

This school lost its way in recent years. This happened for many complicated reasons. Adults did not stop caring about pupils. They still wanted them to do well but different people had different ideas about what to do for the best. This meant that not everyone was pulling in the same direction. Some pupils have gaps in their learning as a result, while others do really well. The quality of pupils' experiences of school still varies from class to class.

The new headteacher is making sure that everyone is pulling together again, aiming to give pupils the best possible chances.

Most children enjoy school. Some pupils get genuinely fired up about what they learn. Others lose interest and switch off. This means that behaviour in some classes does not help pupils learn as well as they should.

Pupils feel safe. Bullying is rare because it is usually prevented or tackled.

One thing that unites pupils is their care for others and the world around them. The school teaches pupils about important issues and encourages responsible attitudes to them. Pupils respond well to the weekly 'question to ponder', for example wrestling with the things they can do to 'change the world'.

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

There are some strengths in the quality of education. The whole-school push on developing pupils' vocabulary is going well. Teachers introduce pupils to some excellent books that are a great read and stretch pupils' thinking. Teachers ask helpful questions that help pupils learn. The standards past pupils reached by the end of Year 6, particularly in reading, prepared them well for secondary school.

Despite these evident strengths, leaders have correctly identified the need for far-reaching improvements.

In recent years, teachers have had too much freedom to choose what and how they taught. This lack of joined-up thinking means that pupils' knowledge and skills have not built well enough year on year, including in mathematics. Teachers' subject knowledge is not consistently strong. Pupils do better in some classes than in others.

Under the new headteacher, the school has begun to sort this out but there is still more to do.

The new headteacher has wasted no time. She has started to build the leadership capacity to help improve the school by getting more people involved in leading the improvements. Subject leaders have made a determined start. Governors are very committed. Their experience, knowledge and skills mean that they are well placed to contribute to this journey.

Reading has a high priority. There is a strong determination that all pupils will learn to read. The large majority do, with some reaching standards beyond their years, but current pupils are at risk of not repeating this same success. For example, last year, early years children did not achieve well enough, including in reading.

The teaching of phonics is not as strong as it needs to be to ensure that all pupils keep up or catch up quickly again if they fall behind.

There have already been notable improvements in the early years this term. Children are settled and happy. The early years is on the right track but leaders know that there is still a way to go.

Much successful work goes into meeting the needs of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Leaders have put effective processes in place to identify pupils' particular needs. They work closely with parents and carers and outside professionals to do this. Pupils are given additional support by well-trained staff. However, work in class does not always meet their needs well enough to support their learning.

Pupils are committed to their school values. They can explain what these mean for them. Pupils are proud of their fundraising for charity to help less-fortunate children.

Pupils embrace the enriching trips and clubs on offer, such as cooking, dance and art. They welcome opportunities to take part in the school council or be a 'class buddy'. Pupils recalled their learning from 'The Fantastic Fred Experience' with enthusiasm. They explained how it gave them ways to help look after their own mental health.

Despite pupils' positive personal development, their behaviour is not as good as it should be. When pupils lose interest in class, this sometimes stops nearby pupils from concentrating too. Adults do not always challenge this behaviour. Most pupils conduct themselves well around the school. But some pupils push others and are boisterous when lining up in the dining hall and on the playground.

Leaders at all levels are ambitious. They are also mindful of staff well-being and workload. Overall, staff are on board with the renewed direction and purpose. They want to help leaders make the school the best it can be.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders and staff keep a watchful eye on the well-being of pupils. Where safety is concerned, they worry in just the right way about the little things that could build into bigger issues if not caught. Leaders take any concerns seriously. They seek and follow advice from other specialist professionals if they spot something more serious or if they are unsure.

Safeguarding is at the forefront of everybody's mind. Recently, leaders have made systems tighter to make sure that nothing can slip through the net.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- At present, exactly what pupils should learn and in what order across the school are not laid down and followed well enough. In some subjects, there is a tension between the content of topics, the national curriculum subjects and the school's own skills progressions. Leaders should make sure that the curriculum sequence and coverage are clearly defined so that they build pupils' knowledge and skills consistently well over time.
- The variability in the quality of education is not just about it being unclear what should be taught when. Leaders should ensure that teachers have strong subject knowledge. Teachers should all follow the same policies and approaches so that pupils achieve as well as they should, including pupils with SEND.
- Phonics teaching for younger pupils is not strong enough to get them off to the best possible start in learning to read. Expectations of how quickly children can learn phonics are not always high enough. Some pupils that fall behind in reading do not catch up as quickly as they could. Leaders should ensure that the expectations in phonics are clear and suitably ambitious. They should also make sure that all adults who teach phonics are sufficiently well trained. This is so that pupils keep up or are identified quickly if they fall behind and helped to catch up without delay.
- Some pupils have gaps in their mathematics knowledge and understanding. Leaders should prioritise work to improve the curriculum and teaching in mathematics. This is to help older pupils plug these gaps in their mathematical proficiency and to prevent new ones forming for younger pupils.
- Leaders have managed a challenging time for the Reception class well in the circumstances. They should take the necessary steps to stabilise the situation in order to secure a better quality of education in the early years.
- Many pupils behave well. However, in some classes, pupils' needs are not met well enough or they lose interest. Similarly, while the majority of pupils conduct themselves well outside of lessons, some do not. Leaders should ensure that pupils' behaviour gives everyone the best possible opportunity to achieve well.

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're 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

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| Unique reference number | 118685 |
| Local authority | Kent |
| Inspection number | 10111444 |
| Type of school | Primary |
| School category | Voluntary controlled |
| Age range of pupils | 4 to 11 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number of pupils on the school roll | 189 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair of governing body | Stephen Booth |
| Headteacher | Kate Espley |
| Website | www.eastry.kent.sch.uk/ |
| Date of previous inspection | 14–15 October 2009 |

Information about this school

- The new headteacher took up post in September. The former headteacher left in the middle of the previous academic year. One of the assistant headteachers became the acting headteacher until the new headteacher arrived, supported two days per week by an interim executive headteacher from another school. The former deputy headteacher left at the end of the previous academic year.
- The Reception teacher and early years leader has been absent most of this academic year and was not present during the inspection.
- This is a voluntary controlled Church of England school. The previous section 48 inspection of the school's distinctiveness and effectiveness as a Church of England school took place on 29 September 2014. Arrangements have been made for a re-inspection which, at the time of this inspection, was expected imminently.

Information about this inspection

We carried out this inspection under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We deemed the inspection a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

- Throughout this inspection, we worked closely with the headteacher and the assistant headteacher, who is also the special educational needs coordinator. We also met with subject leaders and staff, governors, two representatives of the local authority and the former interim executive headteacher.
- To help understand the quality of education, we looked in detail at a handful of subjects. The subjects we agreed with leaders were reading, mathematics, science and history. We spoke with leaders for these subjects, looked at their plans, visited lessons, talked with groups of pupils about their work and spoke with their teachers. We kept in touch with senior leaders before, during and after these activities to make sure that we understood how what we found fitted in with the overall quality of education.
- We made careful checks of how well the school keeps pupils safe. We met with the leaders with overall responsibility for safeguarding and looked at their records. We spoke with other staff about their knowledge and understanding of what to look out for and what to do in response to concerns. We scrutinised the single central record to make sure that the school is checking thoroughly that there is no known reason that adults should not be working with children.
- Throughout our time in school, we observed its daily life. We spoke informally with pupils, staff and parents about different aspects of the school, and looked at photographs, displays and other evidence about the activities that enrich pupils' experiences.

Inspection team

Clive Dunn, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Stephanie Scutter

Ofsted Inspector

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