

Church Hill Church of England Junior School

Church Hill Road, Thurmaston, Leicester, LE4 8DE

Inspection dates

12–13 November 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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

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

- Leaders' analysis of the school's academic performance has been too generous. As a result, they have not made sufficiently rapid progress in improving teaching and pupils' achievement.
- Improvement plans lack clarity and precision. This reduces the contribution of subject and other leaders to improving the school's work.
- Governors are not fully effective in holding leaders to account.
- In 2014, progress in mathematics fell and it lags behind progress in reading and writing.
- Disadvantaged pupils did not catch up with others in the school.
- Although the progress of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs improved in 2014, it remains too variable. Support is not always timely and effective.
- Work is not consistently challenging, especially for the most-able pupils. Questioning is rarely used to probe and deepen understanding.
- Teachers do not always check carefully on all members of the class, so that on occasion some pupils' slow progress is not addressed.
- Although pupils approach lessons enthusiastically their concentration slips when work is too easy or uninteresting.

The school has the following strengths

- Leaders' high expectations of behaviour have created a harmonious and courteous school community.
- The school keeps pupils safe. Pupils and their parents appreciate this.
- Pupils take pride in presenting their work neatly and accurately.
- Leaders from other schools are now checking standards. The outcomes are being used to drive improvements.
- The curriculum promotes strong spiritual, moral and social values, including respect for people from different cultural backgrounds. Primary sports funding has been well spent to extend pupils' opportunities.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed learning in 15 lessons; two of these were seen jointly with the headteacher. Inspectors also visited an assembly and form time. They observed children's conduct at break and lunchtime.
- Discussions were held with the headteacher, other leaders, class teachers, governors and representatives of Syston and Thurmaston Educational Partnership (STEP).
- Inspectors met with three groups of pupils, two selected at random. They spoke with many others informally, particularly in class. Inspectors listened to pupils reading.
- Pupils' books were examined in lessons. Inspectors also looked at a significant amount of work in greater depth including some from the previous academic year.
- During the inspection, inspectors looked at a wide range of documents both on paper and online. These included: development plans and their evaluations; records of how leaders check on teaching; minutes of meetings of the governing body; case studies; policies; safeguarding records; records of pupils' progress; and school publicity and newsletters.
- Inspectors took into account the 23 responses to the online Parent View questionnaire. They also considered the 20 responses to the questionnaire for staff.

Inspection team

Martin Spoor, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Simon Camby	Additional Inspector
Pippa Jackson-Maitland	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Church Hill Junior School is an average-sized primary school. It converted to become an academy school on 1 November 2012. When its predecessor school of the same name was last inspected by Ofsted it was judged to be good overall.
- The school is a member of the Syston and Thurmaston Educational Partnership (STEP), a partnership of ten academy schools. Some of the support the school receives from this organisation is provided by a Local Leader in Education (LLE).
- Nearly two thirds of pupils are of White British heritage and a fifth of Indian heritage. More than a quarter of pupils speak English as an additional language, although very few are at an early stage of learning English.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is above average.
- Just over a fifth of pupils receive support from the pupil premium, which is additional funding for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and those in local authority care. This proportion is slightly below the national average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum requirements for pupils' attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 6.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching and increase the proportion of pupils attaining at the higher levels by ensuring that all teachers:
 - provide work which is built upon prior learning and is consistently challenging for all pupils, particularly the most able
 - provide pupils with specific opportunities to deepen their understanding, for example through extended questioning.
- Improve leadership and management by:
 - ensuring that judgements on the school's performance are accurately based on all the available evidence
 - identifying and prioritising measurable actions which will have an impact on learning
 - ensuring that all staff and governors focus single-mindedly on accelerating academic progress.
- Accelerate the progress of groups of pupils at risk of underachievement by:
 - making sure that additional support is promptly delivered and evaluated
 - providing relevant training for all staff who provide it.

An external review of governance and a review of the school's use of the pupil premium should be undertaken to assess how these aspects of leadership and management may be improved.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management

requires improvement

- Since the school opened as an academy, senior leaders have not pursued pupils' academic progress with enough determination and academic standards are only now beginning to rise.
- The senior leaders' evaluation of the school has been too generous, and their plans insufficiently focused. As a result, the impact on pupils' learning of actions taken by other leaders in the school has been variable. Joint observations confirmed that the headteacher is an accurate monitor of the quality of learning in the classroom, but observations need to be considered alongside the longer-term progress of pupils in the class.
- Leaders from the STEP partnership have confirmed that teachers are now assessing pupils' work accurately and that leaders are making correct judgments about the quality of teaching. Their thorough analysis of the school is helping to ensure that there is a sharper focus on raising achievement. This shows that the school does have the capacity to improve.
- The school's curriculum is broad. Teachers use subjects such as history, technology, art and music to celebrate and educate about other cultures, for example, through an African drumming workshop or teaching about French impressionist painters. They are also taught about British traditions. Pupils enjoy the richness of these experiences and they learn to admire and respect different cultures. They believe they are well prepared for secondary school.
- Training for teaching assistants has not been effective in ensuring they always support pupils' learning effectively and help them make progress.
- The primary sports funding has been effectively targeted to improve teachers' skills as well as provide additional coaching. Evaluation takes into account the long-term impact on pupils' attitudes and well-being, as well as the immediate benefits. Funding to support disadvantaged pupils has been used appropriately on strategies to motivate pupils and help with their learning, but evaluation of its impact is too general.
- Although the school is in the early stages of working towards full implementation of its preferred approach to assessment following the removal of National Curriculum levels, assessment practice has been improved to identify more clearly what pupils learn in each unit of work. Standardised tests are used regularly.
- The headteacher has insisted on high standards of behaviour. She has explicitly promoted spiritual, moral and social values, with the result that pupils are curious, kind and entirely respectful of each other's cultures and traditions. There is no discrimination within the school. Leaders promote equal opportunities well but have not yet managed to ensure all pupils make the same progress.
- The school's arrangements for safeguarding meet all statutory requirements. Staff show tenacity in securing the cooperation of other agencies to help vulnerable children.
- The headteacher sets precise targets for staff and judges teachers' performance effectively. The results are used to make decisions about pay rises and promotion. Staff, including teachers at an early stage of their careers, report that training is helping them to improve.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors do not scrutinise information provided by the headteacher on academic performance rigorously and impartially. They are aware of how the pupils fare compared with pupils nationally and how the pupil premium is spent. However, their expectations are too low and so they do not hold leaders sufficiently to account or seek to improve the school with enough urgency.
 - Governors fulfil all their statutory responsibilities, including those for safeguarding, and managing the pay of the headteacher and other teachers. They ensure money is spent wisely and the site is well maintained. Planning is in place for an anticipated rise in pupil numbers. Governors make sure that

they receive training on new developments. Governors are acutely interested in the quality of teaching and are committed to rewarding only those teachers who can demonstrate a high level of performance. They actively promote mutual respect between people of different faith and cultural background within the school's Christian ethos.

- Governors welcome the opportunities provided by the STEP partnership for coordinating training and monitoring standards.

The behaviour and safety of pupils

requires improvement

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement. Pupils approach their learning with enthusiasm, but when the task is insufficiently challenging, or goes on for too long to sustain their interest, their spark disappears and some become inattentive. In these circumstances, progress slows and a few talk quietly to each other rather than listen to the teacher. All pupils strive to present their written work neatly and collaborate effectively when asked to work in groups or pairs.
- Pupils report that a very few pupils interfere with their enjoyment of some lessons. They say that teachers do act to improve the behaviour, but that it tends to recur.
- Pupils' conduct at social times is courteous and responsible. They respect the school buildings and are proud of the contribution that the school council made to improving play equipment. They treat adults with unfailing politeness and play happily together with low-key supervision.
- The school records behavioural incidents carefully. There have been very few incidents of a racist nature, and the school has handled them with an appropriate degree of seriousness. The school has not excluded a pupil permanently and the rate of fixed term exclusion is low.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. Child protection procedures are robust and the school involves other agencies promptly to support vulnerable children. The site is secure and risks are assessed regularly and checked by governors.
- Pupils say that they feel very safe at school and their parents agree. They report that bullying is very rare. They have complete confidence in the staff to resolve any problems. Pupils know about different types of bullying. The school provides regular information about how to keep safe including road safety and how to keep safe on the internet.
- Attendance has improved, and is now good. The school attributes much of this success to the employment of its own attendance officer.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- Over time, teaching has not ensured that pupils make consistently good progress in reading, writing or mathematics. The quality of teaching in all subjects is too variable. Sometimes the work provided for pupils is not planned to build carefully on what pupils already know and tasks are not challenging enough, particularly for more-able pupils. In some lessons, more-able pupils are required to complete too much routine work before beginning activities which would really stretch them.
- If pupils become restless, some teachers do not respond firmly enough to inattention or talking across the class discussion, with the result that such behaviour tends to persist.
- The impact of teaching assistants in supporting pupils with their learning is uneven. Some are very skilled at asking the right questions and encouraging pupils to think for themselves. Others, however, have too little interaction with pupils and do not fully support teachers in making sure that all pupils progress well enough.

- There are occasions when teachers do not know which pupils have grasped new ideas and are ready for more difficult work and which ones are struggling. The emphasis is placed on completing the task, rather than on gaining knowledge and understanding. Pupils are always willing to respond in class, but questioning is rarely extended to challenge pupils' initial ideas and explore alternatives, so that pupils often do not deepen their understanding as fully as they might.
- Relationships between teachers and their pupils are strong. Teachers maintain consistently high expectations for the presentation of work. It is marked frequently, assessed accurately and teachers make comments which are helpful to pupils in improving their work. Occasionally, insufficient attention is given to errors in spelling, punctuation and grammar.
- Teachers' subject knowledge is secure, and they insist on using the correct terminology and spelling it correctly. Pupils recognise that homework makes a good contribution to learning and there were several instances of individuals devoting additional time to tasks which gripped their imagination. Pupils meet the expectation that they read at home regularly.
- In discussion with inspectors, teachers were generally perceptive and realistic about their own effectiveness.

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Achievement requires improvement because progress is not accelerating fast enough. In 2014, pupils' attainment at the end of Key Stage 2 was in line with the average of all pupils nationally. This represented a slight improvement in reading standards and a greater one in English grammar, punctuation and spelling. There was a slight decline in mathematics attainment.
- Disadvantaged pupils ended Year 6 approximately two terms behind their peers in school in reading, three and a half terms in writing, and two and a half terms in mathematics. The gaps with other pupils nationally are similar in reading and writing, and nearly three terms in mathematics.
- Published data indicate that these attainment levels represent weak progress during pupils' time in the school, especially in mathematics. School data, based on its own baseline assessment, shows that from their individual starting points on entry to the school pupils' progress is above that found on average nationally.
- Data provided by the school indicate that disadvantaged pupils in most year groups made progress which closed the gap a little on non-disadvantaged pupils nationally, but not with their peers in the school. Pupils who speak English as an additional language catch up well in the lower years of the school, especially in reading.
- A systematic scrutiny of pupils' work from last academic year and this term revealed that progress in two year groups was typically good, but overall, achievement required improvement because some pupils, particularly the most able, were not consistently provided with work that enabled them to make rapid progress.
- The proportion of the most-able pupils who attained the highest levels of attainment rose slightly in 2014. Data supplied by the school indicate that over the last year they generally made good in reading and writing, but that progress in mathematics requires improvement. Inspectors commonly saw examples in all subjects of where their progress was held back by the work not being hard enough.
- Progress data for the relatively small number of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs are uneven, in some instances reflecting pupils' recent arrival in the school. Nevertheless, there are sometimes delays in arranging appropriate additional support, and evaluating its impact, and on average their progress lags a little behind that of their peers in the school.
- There is no significant difference, across the school, between the progress made by White British pupils

and those from minority ethnic groups.

- Pupils are highly enthusiastic about their reading and successfully adopt the phonic strategies they have learnt to help them read more challenging texts.

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	138930
Local authority	Leicestershire
Inspection number	449212

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

Type of school	Junior
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	7–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	304
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Margaret Gray
Headteacher	Shereen Kirk
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
Telephone number	0116 2692509
Fax number	n/a
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