

Sir Henry Fermor Church of England Primary School

Crowborough Hill, Crowborough, East Sussex TN6 2SD

Inspection dates

27–28 February 2019

Overall effectiveness	Good
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Good
Early years provision	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- The headteacher leads the school with passion and commitment. Senior leaders' high professional standards and their zest for improvement have galvanised the school team.
- The Tenax Schools Trust has provided an effective balance of firm challenge and strong support to ensure that the school has made much-needed improvements.
- Safeguarding is effective. Systems to protect pupils from harm are established. Pupils say they feel safe.
- Relationships between pupils and staff are strong. The personal development and well-being of pupils are a high priority for all staff.
- Most parents and carers are positive about the school and how leaders are improving it. Many parents praise the effect of the school's Christian ethos and values on pupils' attitudes to learning.
- The behaviour policy and procedures that are well understood by everyone, and carried out consistently, have helped pupils know what is expected of them. Pupils' behaviour is good.
- Governors know the school well. They have a clear understanding of the school's strengths and areas to develop.
- Children in the early years have a happy and successful start to school life because the quality of provision is good.
- The proportion of pupils reaching the national standard in the Year 1 phonics screening check has improved and is now above the national average.
- Most pupils are now making good or better progress. Some pupils are making accelerated progress to catch up because the quality of teaching and learning is good.
- The curriculum meets the needs of pupils well. Leaders have ensured breadth and balance across the curriculum.
- Rates of attendance have improved and are now at the national average. Persistent absence rates for disadvantaged pupils have improved but remain very high.
- The proportions of pupils achieving a greater depth or higher level of learning in writing and mathematics are improving but remain lower than the national averages for primary schools.
- Many middle leaders are new to their role and need further support to develop their subject expertise and leadership skills.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Further develop the roles of middle leaders to strengthen leadership capacity.
- Provide greater challenge in lessons so that more pupils attain at greater depth and higher standards.
- Continue to focus on promoting good attendance for all pupils, as well as improving the attendance of the small group of pupils who are persistently absent.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- The school has emerged from a long period of turbulence. The school joined the Tenax Schools Trust in 2016. Since then, the new leaders, many new teaching staff and revitalised governance have resulted in substantially improved behaviour and outcomes for pupils across the school.
- Senior leaders have established a positive culture, rooted in strong Christian values. As a result, pupils enjoy school and develop well personally, socially and academically.
- Leaders have an accurate view of the quality of education. They identify the right priorities and take effective action. For example, leaders have successfully tackled weaknesses in teaching. They have brought about improvements and raised expectations across the whole curriculum.
- Leaders have developed accurate systems to check how well the school is doing. Information about pupils' progress is gathered regularly. Staff use this information to focus teaching on what pupils need to do and experience next to make good and better progress. The headteacher and her staff engage effectively with local schools and other partners, including the local authority, to check the accuracy of their assessments.
- The school's curriculum is well thought out and focused on giving all pupils the progression of knowledge and skills that they need. The core subjects of English, mathematics and science are enhanced by a rapidly developing wider curriculum where pupils gain subject-specific knowledge and skills. The curriculum for teaching a modern foreign language is developing. Teachers report that the delivery of the computing curriculum is sometimes limited by the software resources currently available.
- Pupils are positive about the extra-curricular opportunities the school provides. Additional funding to promote physical education and sport is spent wisely. Pupils talked enthusiastically to an inspector about the range of clubs available and about the additional opportunities offered at lunchtimes. Pupils particularly enjoy and value the time they spend at forest school sessions.
- The contribution the curriculum makes to the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils is evident in their tolerance and respect for each other and adults. Pupils have insight into democracy through the effective working of the school council and learning about the elective process. They develop empathy through active involvement in such events as Remembrance Day. Pupils learn about a range of cultures and faiths across the curriculum, in assemblies and through special events.
- Some middle leaders are experienced and knowledgeable and drive improvements through staff training, monitoring and analysis. However, many middle leaders are new to their roles. They are being coached and supported by senior leaders and by the trust and are enthusiastic and keen to develop in the roles. However, they do not yet analyse pupils' performance rigorously enough or take a strategic view to ensure that they drive improvement in teaching and learning and pupils' progress in their areas of responsibility.

- Leaders ensure that additional pupil premium funding is spent effectively to ensure that eligible pupils make the best possible progress from their starting points.
- Parents are positive about the recent changes to leadership. One parent who spoke to inspectors reflected the views of many: 'The new leadership is great and very approachable. The ground rules have been set and this is making a real difference to learning and behaviour.'

Governance of the school

- Those responsible for the governance of the school fulfil their duties effectively. The range of relevant knowledge and experience available to the governing body has strengthened its ability to contribute to school improvement.
- Governors visit the school regularly and receive regular evaluations of the performance of the school from senior leaders. Consequently, they have a clear understanding of pupils' experiences and how well pupils are learning.
- Leaders of the trust and local governors are articulate and passionate about promoting high standards. All governors are trained in line with government guidance and, for example, ensure that safeguarding procedures are fit for purpose and implemented effectively. They understand their roles and responsibilities and hold school leaders to account for ensuring that agreed actions bring about the desired improvements.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- The record of recruitment checks is accurate and complete. Leaders have ensured that staff are well trained in their duties, including the 'Prevent' duty, and update all staff in weekly briefing sessions.
- Staff record any concerns in a timely way and know how to pass concerns to the designated safeguarding leaders. Records show that leaders refer to the local authority those pupils who are at risk of harm. However, records of meetings and discussions are not always as meticulous as they might be. A few minor follow-up actions have not been recorded at all.
- The school experiences a high level of pupil mobility, both into and out of the school. Leaders are proactive in ensuring that no child is missing education as a result of these changes.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Historic weaknesses in teaching have been challenged and addressed. Significant changes have taken place in staffing and staff training. As a result, teaching has improved, and pupils now make good progress across subjects.
- Staff intervene swiftly to address misconceptions, enabling pupils to develop their understanding further. Early morning pre-teaching sessions for invited pupils, including

disadvantaged pupils, enable them to be well prepared for the day ahead and are successful in raising pupils' self-esteem.

- Teaching assistants are well deployed. They have a positive impact on learning and pupils' well-being. They support pupils effectively and help remove barriers to their learning by keeping them on track and focused on the task in hand. Most teaching assistants show high levels of skill, particularly in the use of questions.
- The teaching of early reading is effective so that most pupils meet the expected standard in phonics by the end of Year 1. However, most pupils who do not meet the standard at the end of Year 1 fail to meet it again at the end of Year 2. Teachers ensure that these pupils continue to develop and use their phonics knowledge to develop good reading skills in key stage 2.
- Teachers read appealing texts to pupils throughout the school so many pupils develop an interest in, and enthusiasm for, reading. As a result, progress in reading by the end of key stage 2 is above the national average.
- Pupils' writing shows that higher expectations in the quality of writing and plentiful opportunities to write have meant that current pupils are making good progress. A higher proportion of pupils are working at, and above, age-related expectations across classes. High-quality texts are used to promote pupils' reading and writing across the whole curriculum and support pupils to extend their vocabulary and deepen their learning. Pupils' writing in other subjects is of the same quality as their literacy work.
- Leaders have identified key areas of handwriting and spelling to develop across the school. New handwriting expectations have been introduced and there is evidence of rapid progress in some pupils' books. Pupils in some year groups do not yet apply spelling strategies consistently or well enough in their writing.
- Training and new systems in mathematics have supported teachers in delivering the expectations of the mathematics curriculum more effectively. New teaching strategies are helping middle-ability pupils to develop their number skills but they need more opportunities to apply these to reasoning and problem-solving tasks.
- Although teachers have aimed to provide more challenging tasks for the most able pupils, these are not consistently challenging or introduced quickly enough. The most able pupils are often expected to work through tasks that do not fully test their skills and thinking or deepen their learning, leaving little time to tackle the challenging tasks.
- The special educational needs coordinator works closely with teachers to identify, plan for and support pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). These pupils make good progress from their starting points.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils were confident to speak with the inspectors and engaged with them enthusiastically. Pupils of all ages have clear opinions and are keen to voice their pride in the school. Pupils said that they enjoy lessons and appreciate the work that adults

undertake to make learning fun. Pupils say that adults help with everything, especially if they are struggling with work.

- Pupils are proud to take on additional responsibilities, such as head boy and girl and school council members. Pupils also take on responsibility to lead prayer at the end of worship each day.
- Pupils are taught how to keep safe in and out of school. They learn how to keep themselves safe when using the internet. They understand what to do if they encounter concerns while using computers or other devices.
- There are many informative and attractive displays that help pupils understand and celebrate their place in the school, the local community and the wider world. These displays are regularly updated and celebrate both individual and group success and effort.
- The school actively promotes a healthy lifestyle. Meal choices are healthy, and pupils know what constitutes a healthy diet. Year 2 pupils were observed learning about food groups and were keen to investigate and question, with one child pondering 'Are oats healthy?' This led to other pupils deciding that they 'are carbohydrates and give you energy, so they must be healthy'. There are regular exercise sessions and all staff and pupils take part in the 'daily mile'.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Leaders and staff have high expectations of pupils' behaviour. Most pupils are attentive in class and lessons are rarely disrupted by poor behaviour. Pupils generally conduct themselves well around the school. They are welcoming to visitors and are polite and friendly to adults and each other.
- Pupils' conduct in the playground is good. Inspectors saw no inappropriate behaviour during these times. Pupils respond positively to adults' instructions and are clear about how they should behave. A range of clubs and gatherings at lunchtime enable pupils to spend the time quietly if they wish.
- Pupils are polite and sensible when moving between lessons, for example from smaller phonics groups back into whole-class sessions. They know the routines and what is expected of them. They move around with little fuss and are quickly back in class, ready to learn.
- Pupils understand what bullying means. When asked by inspectors, they provided clear explanations but stated that there is no bullying in the school. On the rare occasions that it does happen, they are confident that it is dealt with quickly and effectively by an adult. They are clear about the school's systems for promoting good behaviour and understand the 'Power of 5' methods to deal with any bullying should it occur.
- In response to Parent View, Ofsted's online survey, a very small number of parents expressed concern about pupils' behaviour and how well school leaders deal with bullying. Inspection evidence showed that the rare incidents of bullying and poor behaviour are well managed by leaders and involve discussions with parents.

- Leaders have taken effective action to improve pupils' attendance and, last year, it was in line with the national average. Discussions take place with parents to support them to understand the importance of regular attendance. However, too many disadvantaged pupils do not attend school regularly enough. The persistent absence rate for this group of pupils remains well above the national average.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Historically, outcomes were a concern. Improvements in the quality of teaching and the rigorous tracking of pupils' progress that leaders have introduced have had a significant impact on pupils' attainment and progress. In 2018, outcomes showed a marked improvement, especially at key stage 2.
- The 2018 improvements in outcomes are being sustained by the school. The school's assessment records show that current cohorts of pupils at both key stages 1 and 2 are making good progress from their starting points. This trend is clearly reflected in the quality of work in pupils' books, particularly in writing across the curriculum.
- The inclusive ethos of the school is reflected in the effectiveness of the support it provides for all pupils to be successful. Current disadvantaged pupils and pupils with SEND are making good progress, which is diminishing the differences between them and other pupils in the school.
- The area in which the school was less successful in 2018 was the attainment of the most able pupils. Fewer pupils than nationally attained the higher standards in writing and mathematics at the end of key stage 2. Leaders and teachers now have a greater focus on the progress of the most able pupils, and there is evidence in books that their approach is beginning to have a positive impact.

Early years provision

Good

- Children enter the early years with skills and knowledge that are broadly typical for their age and stage of development. The use of home visits and open day visits ensures that children make a smooth transition between home and school. Children get off to a good start to school in the early years classrooms because teaching and learning are good.
- Adults have a good understanding of children's needs and plan activities that help children to take their next steps across the curriculum. As a result, children, including disadvantaged children, make good progress through Reception and are well prepared for Year 1.
- The teaching of early reading is effective. Children in the Reception classes receive phonics teaching which is accurately pitched to build on their prior knowledge. As a result, children get off to a good start to developing their early reading skills.
- Children behave well in class because expectations are high, and staff have established good routines. Aspects such as risk assessments and appropriate first-aid training for staff are up to date.

- The outside zones provide an extensive area to explore but are underdeveloped as places for children to extend their understanding, often being used as spaces where children's energy is not channelled appropriately towards learning.
- The leader of the early years has a good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the early years provision. She is keen to secure improvements, particularly in the outside areas.
- The partnership between staff and parents is effective. An online system enables parents to have regular updates on their child's progress and achievement. A typical parental comment was: 'The updates received regularly (almost daily) are fantastic. They enable us to gauge our daughter's progress and engagement at school. We are encouraged to upload our own updates too, which the children discuss.'
- Safeguarding is effective and statutory responsibilities are met.

School details

Unique reference number	142611
Local authority	East Sussex
Inspection number	10058124

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	376
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair	Mrs Catherine Dottridge
Headteacher	Mrs Sacha Strand
Telephone number	01892 652 405
Website	www.fermorschool.org.uk
Email address	office@fermorschool.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- This school is larger than the average-sized primary school. The school became a sponsored academy in 2016, part of the Tenax Schools Trust. The school has a local governing board which has delegated responsibilities from the trust for some aspects of governance. The school is a Church of England school, part of the Diocese of Chichester.
- Significant changes in leadership and staffing have taken place over several recent years. The school now has a new deputy head, who started in post in January 2019, to support the headteacher, who has been in post since September 2018. The trust employs the previous headteacher as a part-time advisory headteacher in the school.
- The deprivation indicator for the school is in the lowest 20% of all primary schools. The proportion of pupils who attract pupil premium funding is just below the national average. The proportion of pupils with SEND is below the national average.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed learning in all classes. Most of these observations were carried out jointly with leaders from the school.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, senior and middle leaders, governors and representatives of the academy trust. A telephone conversation with a representative of the diocese was held.
- Inspectors observed the school's work and looked at documentation, including: the school's analysis of its strengths and weaknesses; information on pupils' attainment and progress; records of behaviour and safety; minutes of governing body meetings; and safeguarding documents.
- A discussion was held with a group of pupils, and informal conversations with pupils took place during lessons and at breaktimes. The inspectors listened to pupils read and scrutinised work in pupils' books.
- Inspectors considered 77 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, as well as 57 free-text comments. Views of parents were informally sought at the beginning of the school day.
- Inspectors considered responses to the staff survey.
- No replies to the pupil survey were received.

Inspection team

Marcia Goodwin, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
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Katherine Powell	Ofsted Inspector

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