

Church Hill Church of England Junior School

Church Hill Road, Thurmaston, Leicestershire LE4 8DE

Inspection dates

7–8 December 2016

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
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- The headteacher has built a strong team which is united in its commitment and enthusiasm to provide the best for pupils' academic and personal development. Consequently, Church Hill is now a good and improving school.
- Pupils are now making good progress in a wide range of subjects. Disadvantaged pupils and pupils who are at an early stage in learning English are making the same good or better progress as their peers.
- Progress for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is not as strong as for other groups. The monitoring of support for these pupils is not sufficiently rigorous.
- Teaching is good and improving because leaders have established strong systems for helping new and experienced staff to learn from each other and from other schools.
- The excellent leadership of assessment has provided a very strong foundation for the recent improvements in teaching and learning.
- The teaching of writing is very effective. Pupils' use of grammar and punctuation is impressive. The teaching of reading is improving but it is not as strong as other areas.
- Pupils are unanimous in saying that 'behaviour is good, children feel safe and enjoy coming to school'.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. Pupils learn to be thoughtful and respectful members of the community through assemblies, literacy, history, religious education and other subjects.
- Pupils say they 'enjoy a variety of sport, science investigations are fun and computing is useful for our futures'.
- Most pupils have good attendance. Attendance for disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is below the national average.
- Senior leaders' checks on teaching and learning are strong. Leaders' checks and reports to governors on aspects of pupils' behaviour and personal development are not as effective.
- Governors are much more skilled and knowledgeable than at the time of the previous inspection. They ask leaders challenging questions. Governors need better-quality information and they know 'there are still things to do'.
- The majority of parents regard the school highly. They appreciate the school's nurturing approach. They say that their children are well prepared for life as 'well-raised young people'.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Strengthen teaching, learning and assessment in reading so that pupils make even better progress and more pupils achieve the higher standard.
- Further improve leadership and management by:
 - continuing to build the leadership of special educational needs and/or disabilities so that provision is highly effective and pupils make the best possible progress
 - undertaking more rigorous analyses of the impact of provision for behaviour, personal development, safety and welfare on outcomes for different groups of pupils
 - providing higher-quality information for governors so they can ask even better questions and ensure continued improvement
 - strengthening systems for managing attendance so that all groups of pupils are at least in line with the national average.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

- Pupils and staff live and breathe the values and vision of the words in their school song. Everyone strives to follow the 'The Church Hill Way' through 'teamwork, imagination, perseverance, commitment to learning something new and enjoying what you do'. These high and shared expectations have provided the foundation for the school's recent improvement.
- Since the last inspection, leaders have focused their energy on securing good teaching, learning and assessment. All staff, from newly qualified teachers to senior leaders, say they are 'really well supported'. Staff value opportunities to learn from each other through 'learning studies'. Staff also value work with other local schools, including the STEP Teaching School Alliance. Strong support has helped new team members to settle quickly.
- Highly effective leadership of assessment has helped to ensure that teachers plan tasks matched to the needs of different ability groups. The new electronic system for tracking pupils' progress is very well used. Consequently, leaders, including governors, know which groups of pupils are on track for their end of year targets and which pupils are at risk of falling behind and need additional help.
- Mathematics leadership is very strong and is successfully improving teaching across all year groups. Senior leaders have recently increased English leadership capacity by creating a new post with responsibility for the school's priority area, reading. Even though both English leaders are new, they have a sound understanding of the priorities and next steps for their subjects.
- Leaders ensure that learning across a range of subjects is well planned to engage pupils' interest and curiosity to learn. Pupils say they enjoy carrying out science experiments where they can 'work out stuff for themselves'. For example, pupils learned to recognise and understand more about food chains through dissecting owl pellets.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is a strength of the curriculum. Pupils are thoughtful and respectful. For example, Year 4 pupils showed great empathy as they discussed the story of Saul becoming a Christian. Pupils reflected on Saul's religious experience and explained how this related to their own feelings of joy.
- Pupils have a good understanding of British values and can explain why these are important for school and their adult life. Pupils appreciate the importance of democracy and, very respectfully, asked if the inspector had voted in the recent referendum.
- There are a good number of school clubs to widen pupils' experiences. The primary physical education and sports funding is used well. It provides opportunities for pupils to learn new sports such as tennis and archery. The sports funding is also being used to develop staff skills so pupils have more active lunchtimes. However, leaders do not make sufficiently rigorous checks on which groups of pupils are benefiting from these extra-curricular clubs, or the precise levels of engagement with sporting activities.

- The leader with the responsibility for pupil premium funding manages this area with great rigour. The funds are carefully targeted to meet pupils' different needs, including the needs of most-able pupils. As a result of this work, disadvantaged pupils are making good or better progress and achieving higher standards.
- The leader with responsibility for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities knows these pupils well. Most parents say their children are 'well supported'. The impact of the additional funds for this area is not checked with sufficient rigour. Leaders, including governors, do not have strategic understanding of which interventions provide the most benefit and best value for pupils. The progress for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is not as strong as for their peers.
- Homework is regular. Pupils proudly explain how the high expectations of reading homework are helping to improve their reading. Leaders know that some parents find the pressures of homework challenging. Leaders are providing support through a homework club and making the computer suite available for home learning.
- Leaders have high expectations of pupils' behaviour and attendance. Both these areas have improved since the last inspection. However, leaders' analyses of these areas do not result in governors receiving regular, rigorous information about different pupil groups and comparisons to national averages for attendance.

Governance

- Since the last inspection, governors have commissioned a review of governance and acted on its recommendations. More recently, governors have also sought additional support from a national leader of education. As a result, governors are much better informed and more sharply focused on ensuring that the school provides a good education for pupils.
- Governors now ask questions that challenge senior leaders. For example, at a recent meeting, a governor asked about provision to address national concerns about rising obesity in children. Since then, leaders have started work with families to provide additional activities to improve pupils' fitness and health.
- Governors take their statutory responsibilities seriously. They keep careful checks on pupil premium spending, decisions about staff pay and safeguarding. Governors make regular visits to the school so they have a good understanding of the strengths and priorities for improvement.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Leaders work very closely with a range of external agencies to ensure that pupils are protected and families are well supported. Any concerns about a pupil are followed up quickly and documented carefully. Staff are very persistent in ensuring that pupils and families get the help and support they need to stay safe.
- Pupils told inspectors that they feel safe in school. Pupils explained how they are taught to keep themselves safe when using the internet and also when playing outside. Parents are very confident that their children are safe in school.

- Everyone in school has up-to-date safeguarding training and is expected to take responsibility for making the school a safe place. Leaders' checks to ensure that everyone has understood the training need to be more rigorous.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

- Teaching, learning and assessment are now good and improving. Senior leaders take effective action to address any weaknesses in teaching.
- Assessment is much more accurate than at the time of the last inspection. Pupils are making stronger progress because most lessons provide well for different ability groups. Teachers and teaching assistants know their pupils well and are clear about the next steps needed for pupils to make good progress. This is especially strong in writing. For example, in a Year 5 lesson, the teaching assistant challenged pupils so that they improved their writing by using fronted adverbial phrases.
- Teachers' and teaching assistants' good questioning helps all groups of pupils to improve. This aspect of teaching is strong across the school. During a Year 3 poetry lesson, the teacher's carefully targeted questions helped pupils to identify the key language features of the poem, to correct their own errors and to improve their writing by adding similes.
- The teaching of writing is particularly strong because the staff team has very good knowledge of the grammar and punctuation expectations for each year group. Pupils are regularly expected to apply their learning in this area to writing in a range of subjects. For example, books show the Year 6 pupils learning to use colons in their English books and applying this in their science writing about evolution.
- Pupils enjoy the games and challenges in mathematics. These daily activities are helping pupils to improve mental calculation and reasoning skills. In a Year 4 mental calculation session, pupils quickly grasped how to multiply double-digit numbers by using their knowledge of double numbers. Pupils are frequently expected to think very hard and to apply their reasoning skills. For example, Year 5 pupils were totally immersed in a challenge to identify which fraction was the 'odd one out' and then give their reasons.
- Most pupils say they enjoy reading. Teaching and learning in this area are improving but pupils' learning is not as strong as in other subjects, especially in upper key stage 2. Pupils' independent tasks during guided reading do not always engage pupils well enough, especially the least able. Sometimes the most able pupils read books that do not provide enough challenge.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.

- Pupils have very positive attitudes to their learning. They settle to activities quickly. They are keen to do their best and act on advice to improve their work. Staff have created a very safe environment where pupils are eager to take on new and difficult challenges. Pupils learn to be positive and say 'I can't do it, yet...'
- All pupils who spoke to inspectors were polite and confident. Pupils were keen to share their positive views of the school.
- Pupils are kind to each other and can explain the importance of treating everyone with respect. Pupils say there is very little bullying in school. When there is a problem, pupils say 'it is instantly solved'. Pupils are aware of different sorts of bullying including racism, online bullying and gender-based bullying.
- Pupils have a good understanding of how to stay safe both in and out of school. Pupils know they must not share their personal information when using computers and mobile technology.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils understand the school's high expectations and are committed to fulfilling these so that the school is an orderly and happy place for everyone to learn. Pupils' conduct and self-discipline are consistently strong. Almost all pupils' behaviour is impeccable when they walk around the school. Playtimes and lunchtimes are sociable and harmonious.
- Staff expectations are high so lessons are not interrupted by poor behaviour. Pupils explained to the inspector that staff expect everyone to pay attention in lessons and if you are 'not concentrating, you will be asked a question'.
- Overall attendance is in line with the national average. Since the last inspection, absence levels for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities and pupils who receive free school meals have remained in the top 10% of schools nationally. Persistent absence for these groups is similarly high.
- Pupils with challenging behaviour are well supported. Although exclusions were above the national average in the last two years, there have been no exclusions this year.

Outcomes for pupils

- Since the last inspection, outcomes for pupils have improved and are now good. Inspection evidence shows that current pupils are making good progress across a range of subjects. Pupils are being well prepared for moving on to secondary school.
- In 2016, pupils' progress improved from being significantly below the national average to significantly above the national average for writing, and broadly in line with national averages for reading and mathematics. These improvements were impressive because the test and assessment expectations were much higher than in previous years.
- The school's very effective work to improve pupils' understanding and use of punctuation and grammar underpinned the rapid improvement in writing outcomes. Inspection evidence shows that the improvements in writing made are being sustained this year. Pupils are routinely expected to apply their skills in English lessons and also a range of other subjects such as science, history and geography.

- Good progress is continuing in mathematics. Teachers have devised 'magic maths' lessons which are carefully planned to help pupils to gain speed and confidence in basic counting and calculation skills. All teachers also plan lessons to provide regular opportunities for pupils to apply their mathematics through solving a range of problems.
- Leaders have identified reading as a high priority in order to ensure that progress is stronger and that more middle- and high-attaining pupils, including disadvantaged pupils, achieve the high standard. Current assessment information and inspectors' visits to classrooms demonstrate that pupils' reading skills are improving but not quite at the same rate as writing and mathematics.
- Pupils' current workbooks show that no groups are making less than expected progress and most groups are making good progress. The most able and middle-attaining pupils are generally well challenged, especially in writing and mathematics.
- Support for pupils who speak English as an additional language and disadvantaged pupils is strong. Assessment information, pupils' books and classroom visits all show that these pupils are making good progress across a range of subjects. The pupil premium funding is being effectively targeted to meet the needs of disadvantaged pupils, including the most able.
- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are regularly given additional support. The impact of this support is not checked carefully enough so some of these pupils do not make as much progress as they could.

School details

Unique reference number	138930
Local authority	Leicestershire
Inspection number	10019570

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	315
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Margaret Gray
Headteacher	Shereen Kirk
Telephone number	0116 269 2509
Website	www.churchhill-jun.leics.sch.uk
Email address	theoffice@churchhill-jun.leics.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	12–13 November 2014

Information about this school

- Church Hill Church of England Junior School is a larger than average-sized primary school. The school has seen considerable staffing change since the last inspection. This includes two new assistant headteachers.
- The school is a member of the STEP Teaching School Alliance. The school receives the support of a national leader of education through this partnership.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is in line with the national average. The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language and the proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or a statement of special educational needs is higher than the national average.
- The school meets statutory requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.
- The school complies with Department for Education guidance on what academies should publish.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors spoke to pupils from all year groups both formally and informally. Inspectors observed pupils at playtimes and lunchtimes. Inspectors also listened to pupils read.
- Inspectors met with the headteacher, senior leaders, middle leaders and governors. Inspectors also spoke with teaching and support staff.
- Inspectors spoke informally to parents as they dropped children off at the school gate. They also considered 25 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, the 25 responses sent to Ofsted's free text service and the 107 responses to the school questionnaire.
- Inspectors considered the 19 responses to Ofsted's staff questionnaire and 12 responses from Ofsted's pupil survey.
- Inspectors looked at a range of documentation including the school improvement plan, the school's self-evaluation, the headteacher's reports to the governing body, minutes from governing body meetings, the school's current assessment information about pupils' progress, and information about pupils' attendance, behaviour, safeguarding and teaching.
- Inspectors observed parts of lessons in all classes. Around half of these observations were jointly with members of the senior leadership team. Inspectors also scrutinised pupils' books and assessment information alongside the senior leadership team.

Inspection team

Carol Smith, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Alison Talbot	Ofsted Inspector
Donna Moulds	Ofsted Inspector

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