

Inspection of Corfe Castle Church of England Primary School

East Street, Corfe Castle, Wareham, Dorset BH20 5EE

Inspection dates: 11–12 February 2020

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

The quality of education

Requires improvement

Behaviour and attitudes

Requires improvement

Personal development

Requires improvement

Leadership and management

Requires improvement

Early years provision

Requires improvement

Previous inspection grade

Good

What is it like to attend this school?

The quality of education is not good enough. Pupils do not secure the knowledge and skills they need in reading, writing and mathematics. Interim leaders have taken important steps to improve the teaching of basic skills but it is still early days. Plans to develop the quality of the wider curriculum are in their infancy.

Pupils told inspectors: 'We are all happy here; everyone knows everyone; there's always someone to help us.' Pupils have made a banner that captures a key strength of Corfe Castle: 'The only ship that never sinks is friendship.' Pupils make good friends, and are happy and safe at the school.

Pupils take part in a wide variety of activities throughout the year. They sing in a choir, learn to drum and play a variety of musical instruments. They attend forest school, have lots of fun with different sports and join in with the Purbeck Art Week.

Leaders and staff recognise that improvements are needed. The executive headteacher and interim deputy headteacher have quickly ensured that essential systems are in place. This means the school is a safe place and learning can improve. Some parents and carers and some staff are unhappy about the changes. Others welcome them.

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

Interim leaders have recently strengthened the school's approach to the teaching of reading, writing and mathematics. They have bought new resources. Teachers assess learning regularly. Leaders can now check pupils' understanding so that, if pupils are falling behind, they can receive extra help. However, staff expectations are not high enough. The curriculum is not challenging enough. Teachers too often accept work that is poorly presented or simply not good enough.

The teaching of phonics is not precise or systematic enough. Pupils do not use their phonics knowledge automatically when reading. The books that teachers give pupils to read are well matched pupils' reading ability. However, the development of reading through the school is too imprecise and is inconsistent between classes. This means that pupils do not have high-quality opportunities to practise and develop a love of reading.

There are effective approaches for the learning of mathematics in some classes. Pupils develop fluency and strong reasoning skills. In other classes, pupils do not understand what to do. Learning lacks focus and direction.

Curriculum planning is in a state of flux. Pupils cover different subjects. There are opportunities for interesting activities and educational visits. Pupils recall these fondly. However, much of the work is haphazard and there is little evidence of coherent development of learning through the school.

The current provision for the youngest children is not always engaging and challenging. Children do not have enough opportunities to develop their learning through play and exploration. There are already plans in place to address this.

Pupils reflect well on Christian values. They are proud of their spiritual garden. Pupils enjoy a range of different activities to fundraise, work with others and explore art and music. Their knowledge, however, of other cultures and British values is superficial. They are not prepared well for life in modern Britain.

Interim leaders have strengthened the behaviour policy. Pupils respond to teachers' instructions. However, their attitudes to learning are not well developed. Pupils soon become bored and do not push themselves to learn.

The school is rightly proud of its inclusive ethos. Those pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are cared for well. The interim special educational needs coordinator is strengthening the school's work to address some of the concerns of parents.

The school is going through an unsettled time. Trustees have taken the important step to develop capacity by merging with other trusts. This has caused some uncertainty. The absence of the substantive head of school has unsettled many staff and parents. Two out of four teachers are relatively new. The local board of governors and many permanent staff are passionate and committed to the school. However, their roles and responsibilities are confused.

The executive headteacher and interim deputy headteacher have made an accurate assessment of what needs to be done. They have been uncompromising in their expectation that Corfe Castle improves quickly. They are taking appropriate action. Some staff feel that communication is poor and changes are not well thought through. They are concerned that Corfe will no longer be a happy place for pupils. There is no evidence for this but the morale of some staff remains very low.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Staff care for pupils well. They get to know families so that they can understand any problems and issues and support them. This caring approach is an important factor in the school's culture of safeguarding.

Interim leaders have taken essential steps to ensure that staff's work is underpinned by policies and consistent practices. All staff have received appropriate training. Staff know the procedures to follow to raise any concerns. Local leaders, the trust and governors carry out monitoring to ensure that practice remains effective.

Pupils say they are safe in school and most parents and staff agree. Pupils feel that concerns will be dealt with. They are taught about keeping safe and can talk about this confidently.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The school is not providing a good enough quality of education. Pupils do not have the opportunity to develop their skills in reading, writing and mathematics systematically and consistently through the school. Too much is dependent on the skills and knowledge of individual teachers. Leaders need to ensure that all staff have the knowledge and skills to teach core subjects effectively.
- The current curriculum is not well planned. As a result, pupils engage in unrelated activities that do not build their knowledge effectively. Leaders need to establish a coherent curriculum that describes the key knowledge that pupils are expected to develop in each year group. They should build upon the memorable activities that already take place and on the governors' desire for the curriculum to be firmly rooted in the local community.
- Expectations are too low. Staff need to be clear what is expected from pupils in different age groups and how learning builds through the school and prepares pupils for the future. They must be aspirational for pupils of different abilities. The curriculum should be challenging so that pupils are aspirational themselves and motivated to do their best.
- The environment for the youngest children is not good enough. They do not have consistent opportunities to explore and challenge themselves. This means that they cannot explore their own ideas across the curriculum, building on their own interests and stage of development. Leaders need to provide a high-quality environment, both indoors and outdoors, to motivate children to engage and learn.
- The morale of some staff is very low. Many parents are unsettled. Many blame recent changes but they do not always have the full picture. Leaders should continue to strengthen communication with groups. Where they can, leaders should share their rationale for change, timescales and how things will be monitored. All stakeholders, including staff and parents, should consider their own responsibilities to work collaboratively in the future to make Corfe a successful school.
- Leadership is in a state of flux. Too much rests on the skills and expertise of the executive headteacher and the interim deputy headteacher. Leaders and governors should clarify their roles and responsibilities. They must ensure that staff have the skills and knowledge they need to lead the school so that the quality of education improves.

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 are the school and you are 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

Unique reference number	142145
Local authority	Dorset
Inspection number	10111559
Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	95
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Brendan Mullany
Headteacher	Emma Morgan
Website	www.corfecastle.dorset.sch.uk/
Date of previous inspection	20 February 2018, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- In September 2015, the school became an academy and joined the Saturn Education Trust. When its predecessor school was last inspected by Ofsted, it was judged to be good overall.
- It is anticipated that, in March 2020, the Saturn Trust will merge with two other local multi-academy trusts.
- The school is smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- Children in the early years are taught in a class with Year 1 pupils. There are three other classes.
- Most pupils are of White British heritage. The proportion of pupils with SEND is higher than the national average.
- The head of school has been absent since September 2019. The school has been led by senior leaders from the Saturn Trust. The trust's teaching and learning coach has fulfilled the role of interim deputy headteacher. She has been supported by the executive headteacher.

Information about this inspection

We carried out this inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

- We held meetings with the executive headteacher, the interim deputy headteacher, teachers and support staff. We met with a group of governors from the local governing board and the chair of trustees from the Saturn Trust.
- We did deep dives in these subjects: reading, mathematics, history and writing. This entailed discussions with subject leaders, visits to classrooms, looking at examples of work, discussions with teachers, discussions with pupils and listening to pupils read.
- We considered the views of staff during meetings and conversations throughout the inspection. We examined two letters from staff and the responses of 20 staff to the confidential questionnaire.
- We examined safeguarding policies and practices, including the central record of recruitment checks on staff.
- We spoke to parents during the inspection and considered the views of 34 parents who responded to Ofsted's Parent View questionnaire.

Inspection team

Stephen McShane, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Martin Bragg	Ofsted Inspector

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