

Inspection of a good school: Charlton Mackrell Church of England Primary School

Bonfire Lane, Charlton Mackrell, Somerton, Somerset TA11 7BN

Inspection dates:

3 December 2019

Outcome

Charlton Mackrell Church of England Primary School continues to be a good school. However, inspectors have some concerns that standards may be declining, as set out below.

What is it like to attend this school?

Leaders have designed a curriculum that provides pupils with a wide and interesting range of experiences. The headteacher is swiftly raising expectations of what pupils can achieve academically. Nevertheless, leaders, including governors, know there is more to do to ensure that the curriculum is sufficiently demanding and serves all pupils consistently well. In some subjects, pupils do not learn enough.

The school is well known for the quality of pupils' musical instrument playing and singing. A great many pupils have the opportunity to perform in public, both locally and nationally. Pupils take part, with success, in sporting competitions against other schools.

Pupils enjoy school. They feel safe and say that the school is like a family. Pupils are kind to each other. Older pupils take their positions of responsibility seriously. For example, they help out younger children as playground 'buddies'.

Pupils respect adults and welcome visitors. Bullying is rare. Pupils say that adults would help to sort it out if it were to occur. On the whole, pupils behave well. Most pupils pay attention in their lessons. However, some pupils can become distracted.

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

Since taking up her post, the headteacher has resolved many complicated issues. She has acted wholeheartedly to tackle the root causes of the weaknesses. The headteacher has taken on board advice swiftly. Consequently, the school is recovering

steadily. Parents and carers are very supportive and notice many school-wide improvements too.

Leaders and teachers have made a positive start in ensuring that the curriculum follows a clear sequence that helps pupils build their understanding and knowledge over time. However, expectations of what pupils can achieve are sometimes too low. Pupils of the same age but in different classes have very different learning experiences. This can make it hard for teachers to plan work that closely meets the needs of pupils who need to catch up.

Leaders recognise that teachers' expectations of pupils' writing were not high enough. Leaders have started to sort this out. However, weaknesses in pupils' writing remain. Teachers do not plan tasks carefully enough to build on what pupils already know. Teachers' subject knowledge is not sufficiently strong. For example, some pupils cover the same ground each year, but teaching does not deepen their understanding over time. This lack of demand means that some pupils do not learn enough. When this happens, pupils lose their focus.

Many pupils enjoy reading. The library is a well-stocked and attractive place to read, with a range of high-quality books for pupils to choose from. Children start to learn phonics from the beginning of their Reception Year. The headteacher is ensuring that staff are being trained to deliver a consistent approach to the teaching of phonics across the school. A systematic approach to the teaching of phonics has begun this term. However, pupils who struggle to read, including some with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), and those who are disadvantaged, do not use and apply phonics well enough yet. Teachers have not ensured that pupils have all the knowledge they need to read well. Their plans are not overcoming pupils' gaps in knowledge sufficiently well.

The values of the school's Christian foundation are central to school life. Pupils are responsive to opportunities to reflect together, such as at the 'Open The Book' collective worship in the village church. All pupils learn to play an instrument, and all sing in at least one of the school choirs. The curriculum leads pupils to think about life beyond their community through activities, such as visits to places of worship, including the synagogue in Exeter, and fund-raising for a worldwide education charity.

In early years, children have trusting relationships with the adults around them. Their needs are well known. All, including those with SEND and the youngest children in pre-school, follow the early years curriculum. Pre-school children's learning is enhanced by adults' creative use of the outdoor environment to promote children's physical and language development.

Leaders' actions have improved pupils' attendance. They now attend as well as pupils in other schools. Staff recognise that developments to improve the school do mean more work for them. However, they say that leaders are mindful of their workload.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders ensure that the school's policies, procedures and record keeping are up to date. Staff have the training needed to help them keep pupils safe. Staff show a good understanding of what to do if they have a concern about a child. The headteacher and governors acted swiftly to address shortcomings identified in a local authority review of the school's practice last year. For example, they improved the security of the site. Parents appreciate the changes made and, overwhelmingly, now feel that their children are safe at school.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The teaching of early reading is not strong enough. This is because in the past, the teaching of phonics has not been effective, and pupils have too many gaps in their knowledge about language. Although leaders have introduced a systematic approach to the teaching of phonics and identified the gaps, it is too soon to see an impact on pupils' language knowledge. Leaders should ensure that these recent changes have the desired and enduring impact on pupils' reading and spelling.
- Despite improvements during last year, some teachers' subject knowledge and their use of assessment do not identify what pupils need to learn next, particularly in writing. As a result, the work teachers plan for pupils often lacks challenge. Leaders should ensure that all teachers have the necessary subject knowledge, appreciation of the national curriculum and understanding of assessment to enable them to plan teaching that extends all pupils' learning sufficiently well.
- The curriculum is not clearly sequenced across all subjects. Consequently, pupils do not build their knowledge securely over time. Leaders should ensure that subject plans meet the expectations of the national curriculum, as a minimum, in all subjects. Furthermore, plans should have a clear progression so that pupils know more and remember more in each subject.

Background

When we have judged a school to be good we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains good. This is called a section 8 inspection of a good school or non-exempt outstanding school. We do not give graded judgements on a section 8 inspection. However, if we find some evidence that the school could now be better than good or that standards may be declining, then the next inspection will be a section 5 inspection. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the section 8 inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will convert the section 8 inspection to a section 5 inspection immediately.

This is the second section 8 inspection since we judged the school to be good in March 2011.

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 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	123746
Local authority	Somerset
Inspection number	10058418
Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	2 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	75
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Alistair Thompson
Headteacher	Rebecca Cawley
Website	www.charltonmackrellschool.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	19 January 2016

Information about this school

- The headteacher joined the school in September 2018. The chair of the governing body took up his role in September 2019.
- Charlton Mackrell is a voluntary controlled church school. At the most recent section 48 inspection of denominational education, in May 2016, the school received an judgement of outstanding.
- Children are admitted to the governor-run pre-school from the age of two years.

Information about this inspection

- We met with the headteacher and other school leaders, governors and a representative of the local authority. We also talked with teachers, teaching assistants and other school staff.
- We carried out deep dives in these subjects: reading, writing and music. We met with leaders about curriculum design. We visited lessons in all classes. We talked with pupils about their learning and looked at their books. We spoke with teachers from lessons visited. An inspector listened to pupils read.

- We checked to see how the school keeps pupils safe. We looked at the school's records and procedures. We asked staff how they keep pupils safe. We asked pupils what they would do if they had a worry or concern. We checked how the school makes sure staff are recruited safely.
- We explored the school's provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- We observed pupils as they played outside at break- and lunchtime. We talked with pupils about their life at school.
- An inspector met parents on the playground at the start of the school day. We looked at the 23 responses to the Ofsted Parent View survey and the free-text comments received.

Inspection team

Sarah O'Donnell, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Marion Borland

Ofsted Inspector

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