

Inspection of Firle Church of England Primary School

The Street, Firle, Lewes, East Sussex BN8 6LF

Inspection dates: 8 and 9 June 2022

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

The quality of education

Requires improvement

Behaviour and attitudes

Good

Personal development

Good

Leadership and management

Requires improvement

Early years provision

Requires improvement

Previous inspection grade

Good

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils have a deep understanding of the school's values of kindness and respect. They look after each other to make sure that everyone has a friend to play with. Bullying is rare and pupils trust the adults to help them resolve any conflicts quickly. The school council has been working with school leaders to develop plans for the new school playground equipment. Pupils are proud to see their vision become a reality.

Pupils learn to be confident about their self-identity and staff encourage them to be proud of who they are. Pupils lead assemblies to share their heritage stories. Pupils also learn about different family dynamics, and they told inspectors, 'We are all human, we are all the same even if we live differently.'

Typically, pupils try their best to meet the high expectations of their teachers. However, pupils do not achieve as well as they should in some subjects. This is because leaders do not design learning that helps all pupils remember the knowledge they need over time.

Pupils enjoy listening to the well-selected stories that their teacher has chosen for them. However, not all pupils learn to read well enough themselves. Leaders do not ensure that all pupils have access to the books they need to practise reading at home.

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

In subjects such as mathematics, leaders have identified the important knowledge and skills that pupils need to know to be able to learn more in the future. They order this learning, so it is clear how new learning connects to what pupils have learned previously. This is not the case for other subjects such as art and science. Though leaders are clear what they want pupils to know and do by the end of primary school, they have not considered the learning required to get to these points.

Leaders do not regularly check how well pupils are learning across different subjects. Assessments are not planned to specifically identify gaps in pupils' knowledge. Though teachers do check pupils' work, they do not always identify misconceptions or give enough time for trying again. This prevents pupils from gaining a secure foundation of knowledge on which to build. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) struggle to learn well enough in science. Leaders have not made sure that all staff are well trained so that they know how to adapt the science curriculum for pupils with SEND.

Leaders have selected a wide range of books and stories to share with the pupils during story time. All staff have had training to help them support pupils to match letters to sounds. However, leaders have not prioritised the time needed to make

sure that pupils learn to read quickly. A significant number of pupils within each year group cannot read as well as they should and leaders have not placed enough emphasis on making sure pupils catch up. When pupils practise reading in school, staff do not take the opportunity to check which sounds they are struggling to learn. Therefore, pupils do not get the targeted help they need. This particularly hinders the progress of pupils with SEND and those with English as an additional language. Leaders have not ensured that pupils read books that match the sounds they are learning. They do not provide pupils with suitable books to practise reading at home.

Relationships between adults and children in early years are warm and nurturing. Adults plan activities which develop pupils' enjoyment of learning. However, there is not enough emphasis on how these activities lead to what leaders have identified as being important for children to know. Staff do not always seize the opportunity to develop children's thinking or problem-solving skills.

Pupils learn about being respectful of differences. They understand their school ethos stems from Christian values. However, they know that other religions and cultures have similar ideals, and this unites them. Pupils learn about stereotypes and teachers encourage pupils to challenge them. Pupils worked with external speakers and their teachers to write a book called, 'This is Me', to celebrate being unique. Pupils are kind and considerate to each other, with older pupils looking out for their younger peers.

Not all pupils attend school well enough or are on time. These pupils and their families do not always get the additional support they need to improve absence quickly enough. Governors regularly monitor the progress of the school's priorities, but they do not always check that leaders maintain safeguarding records with sufficient detail.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

It is clear from discussions with leaders that they know pupils and their families well. There are some gaps in how leaders record information when staff raise concerns. It is not always clear when actions take place, so some entries lack the detail to provide an accurate timeline of response. Leaders know this and are working closely with the governors to swiftly and easily address this.

Pupils learn about being safe online and how to maintain positive healthy relationships. They know they can go to an adult in school for help if they need to.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Leaders have not ensured that pupils in Reception and Year 1 read books that match the sounds they are learning, both in school and at home. Teachers do not

regularly check what sounds and letters pupils struggle to read. These reading gaps go unaddressed, and a significant number of pupils in all years cannot read well enough yet. Leaders must ensure that the phonics programme is delivered with fidelity and monitored so pupils get the swift help needed to catch up quickly.

- The curriculum does not yet sufficiently identify the knowledge that pupils need to know from Reception to Year 6. As a result, the curriculum is not always implemented in a way which helps pupils connect key ideas or remember more overtime. Leaders must ensure that their ambitions for a knowledge-rich curriculum are realised so that all pupils across every year group develop the knowledge they need to learn more.
- Leaders have not ensured that all pupils have good attendance and are punctual to school. A minority of pupils, particularly disadvantaged pupils, are missing a significant amount of learning time in school. Leaders must ensure that they take appropriate action quickly and effectively to ensure good attendance and punctuality for all pupils.
- Some pupils' individual safeguarding records have gaps in their detail, like dates and names. This means that sometimes important information is not recorded with enough detail to provide a clear story about a pupil. Leaders and governors know this and are in the process of strengthening their oversight of how well leaders are making sure the processes are followed consistently well.

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 information from Ofsted Parent View 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	114525
Local authority	East Sussex
Inspection number	10227932
Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	78
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Debra Vice Holt
Headteacher	Rachel West
Website	www.firleschool.co.uk/
Date of previous inspection	20 April 2017, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school does not currently use any alternative provision.
- This school is part of the Oak Tree Federation with Laughton Community Primary School. Governors and the senior leadership team work across both federated schools.
- This school is a voluntary controlled Church of England school in the Diocese of Chichester. Its last section 48 inspection took place on 17 March 2016.

Information about this inspection

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

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors met with senior leaders, staff and pupils. They also spoke with representatives of the governing body, including the chair. An inspector spoke with a representative of the local authority and the Diocese of Chichester.

- The inspection team carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics, science and art. They discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, teachers and pupils, visited lessons and looked at samples of pupils' work. Inspectors also reviewed plans for the teaching of science and art. An inspector also reviewed the workbooks for a selection of pupils from every subject area.
- Inspectors considered the 26 responses to the Ofsted Parent View questionnaire, including 18 free-text comments. They also took account of the responses to the confidential staff survey and gathered the views of both staff and pupils throughout the inspection.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, inspectors reviewed the school's website and policies and met with the designated safeguarding leads. They also spoke to pupils, staff and governors and scrutinised school records of the safeguarding checks on adults working in the school.
- Inspectors reviewed and scrutinised a range of the school's documentation, including leaders' plans for improving the school, their evaluation of how well the school is currently performing, minutes of governing body meetings and records of attendance and behaviour incidents.
- A meeting was held with a group of pupils to discuss their views about many different aspects of their school. Inspectors also held informal conversations with pupils at break and lunchtime.

Inspection team

Michelle Lower, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Hanna Miller

Her Majesty's Inspector

Alice Early

Ofsted Inspector

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