

Inspection of Tewin Cowper Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School

Cannons Meadow, Tewin, Welwyn, Hertfordshire AL6 0JU

Inspection dates:	19 and 20 November 2024
The quality of education	Requires improvement
Behaviour and attitudes	Requires improvement
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 are happy in school, and most attend when they should. They know that adults keep them safe and will help them if they have any concerns. Pupils enjoy their lessons. Many are diligent learners.

Pupils speak enthusiastically about what they have learned in a range of subjects. However, the school's expectations of what pupils can achieve are not always high enough. Pupils have the capability to achieve more than they currently do. The school recognises this issue and has begun to take steps to improve the quality of education and raise expectations across the school.

Although pupils are aware of the school rules, lessons are not always calm. While most pupils follow instructions, incidents of poor behaviour, such as shouting out and not listening to adults in lessons, occur too often. This low-level disruption interrupts learning. Adults do not consistently enforce high expectations for behaviour.

Pupils enjoy taking on responsibilities in various roles. They appreciate the wide range of clubs and value the school trips that enhance their learning. Pupils share their understanding confidently about the cultures and religions they have studied. They respect differences and can discuss prejudice and injustice in the world thoughtfully.

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

The school understands the actions that are needed to improve the quality of education. There are concise plans now in place to improve learning and behaviour. These focus rightly on supporting staff, the majority of whom are new to the school, the role or the profession. However, this work is still in its early stages.

The school has reviewed the curriculum to ensure that it clearly identifies the important knowledge that pupils need to learn and to build on over time. However, the development of staff in delivering the revised curriculum is just beginning. As yet, there are inconsistencies in the way that subjects are taught across the school. This is also the case for the standards that the school expects pupils to achieve.

Although the curriculum is now clearly laid out, it is not yet being delivered well enough across subjects and lessons. In many cases, activities do not help pupils to acquire the important knowledge or skills that they need to. Children in the early years engage in a range of learning experiences. However, these do not always provide opportunities for children to practise what they have been learning or align closely with curriculum goals.

In lessons, staff do not routinely check the knowledge that pupils have learned. Gaps in pupils' knowledge emerge, which are not addressed well enough. This means that pupils' learning is not secure and often builds on errors or in a confused way. Across the school, including in Reception, there has been insufficient focus on ensuring that pupils develop strong foundational skills in reading and writing as well as they should. In English, pupils read widely, engage with a diverse range of texts and enjoy listening to stories read by

their teachers. The school has implemented a systematic approach to teaching phonics, starting in Reception. However, activities to help all pupils practise their sounds and support for those who need to catch up are not consistently provided. Therefore, significant gaps remain in pupils' learning.

This is also the case in writing and other subjects, too. Errors and mistakes are not always spotted or addressed. The lack of consistency means that some pupils do not master the essential skills needed for reading and writing and leaves them struggling to achieve at the expected requirements for their age.

The school has a detailed understanding of the needs of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Currently, the school does not make sure that this information is used effectively to fully support and meet pupils' needs.

The school has implemented measures to ensure that most pupils attend regularly. These are working well and most pupils now attend school when they should. However, low-level disruption in lessons hinders pupils from learning well. To address this, the school has introduced training for staff to help establish clear behaviour expectations and provide appropriate support.

Ensuring pupils are happy and that they enjoy and attend school are priorities for leaders. Pupils are spirited and keen to share their learning. They demonstrate mature views on issues in the wider world. They value the extra-curricular activities offered by the school. They know about online safety, healthy lifestyles and relationships. They speak passionately about respect and kindness.

The new leadership team has quickly prioritised safeguarding, attendance and personal development, amid significant staffing challenges. The governing body meets its statutory duties but lacks a clear understanding of its role in improving the school. Leaders are attentive to staff's well-being and committed to supporting them in their roles. Staff are fully on board with the changes that are happening. They are proud to be a part of this 'small school's big dreams' to bring about the necessary improvements for all pupils.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- There are inconsistencies in teaching across the school, including in the early years. Often, activities do not support pupils in learning the intended curriculum. In some instances, this leads to pupils missing important knowledge. The school needs to ensure that staff have the knowledge and expertise to deliver and adapt the curriculum effectively, helping pupils to learn and retain important knowledge for deeper learning.

- Assessments of learning in English are not consistently accurate or effective. Some pupils have not acquired the foundational skills that they need in reading and writing. Where this is the case, they do not achieve well enough. The school needs to ensure that all staff implement the school's assessment and feedback systems effectively.
- In too many lessons, pupils do not listen to teachers' instructions. Pupils shout out and talk over each other, disrupting the lesson and reducing valuable learning time. Leaders must ensure that all staff are trained and supported to consistently apply the school's behaviour policy, reducing low-level disruption and fostering a calm and positive learning environment for all pupils to be successful learners.
- The governing body does not have a clear enough understanding of the school's strengths and areas for improvement. As a result, it is not holding the school sufficiently accountable for improvements in the quality of education and behaviour. Governors require further guidance and support to develop a more strategic approach so that they can better challenge leaders, monitor progress and ensure that the necessary actions are taken to drive improvements across the school.

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.

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

In the report, '[disadvantaged pupils](#)' is used to mean pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND); pupils who meet the [definition of children in need of help and protection](#); pupils receiving statutory local authority support from a social worker; and pupils who otherwise meet the criteria used for deciding the school's [pupil premium funding](#) (this includes pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years, looked after children (children in local authority care) and/or children who left care through adoption or another formal route).

School details

Unique reference number	117457
Local authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	10345208
Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	167
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Diane Hagger
Headteacher	Kelly Fairhall
Website	www.tewincowper.herts.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	8 January 2019, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- There have been significant staffing changes this year. Many teaching and office staff are new to the school. The headteacher and the deputy headteacher took up post in September 2024.
- This school is part of the Diocese of St Albans. The school's last inspection for schools of a religious character, under section 48 of the Education Act 2005, was conducted in December 2019. The next section 48 inspection will take place in 2025.
- The school runs a breakfast club.
- The school does not make use of any alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005. During a graded inspection, we grade the school for each of our key judgements (quality of education; behaviour and attitudes; personal development; and leadership and management) and for any relevant provision judgement (early years and/or sixth form provision). Schools receiving a graded inspection from September 2024 will not be given an overall effectiveness grade.

- Inspections are a point-in-time evaluation about the quality of a school's education provision.
- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors held meetings with leaders, including the headteacher, other senior leaders and members of the local governing body. The lead inspector also held a telephone conversation with a representative from the local authority.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, English, mathematics, science and history. For each deep dive, inspectors held discussions about the curriculum, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers and education support staff, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, inspectors: reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.
- Inspectors reviewed school documentation, including the school improvement plan and minutes from meetings of the governing body.
- Inspectors considered the views of parents through the responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire for parents, Ofsted Parent View. An inspector spoke with several parents on day 2 at the start of the school day.
- Inspectors considered the views of staff and pupils through meetings and informal discussions. Inspectors also considered the views of staff and pupils through their responses to Ofsted's online surveys.

Inspection team

Cindy Impey, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Julie Lawrence

Ofsted Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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