

Inspection of Marhamchurch CofE Academy

Helebridge Road, Marhamchurch, Bude, Cornwall EX23 0HY

Inspection dates: 27 and 28 February 2024

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

The headteacher of this school is Deirdre Petersen. This school is part of Learning Academy Partnership (South West), which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer, Tracey Cleverly, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Joanne Tisdall.

What is it like to attend this school?

Marhamchurch is a happy, calm and safe environment for pupils. They enjoy school and have positive attitudes to learning. Children in the early years show sustained concentration in tasks. Older pupils show care and compassion towards their younger peers at playtimes. Pupils speak to visitors with both courtesy and confidence. Bullying is not an issue.

However, the school is recovering from a period of steep decline. The transfer to the current trust has been a positive one. It has started to address the many weaknesses in the curriculum. There are green shoots emerging, particularly in pupils knowing more and remembering more over time. The recently appointed headteacher has been the driving force behind this. Parents rightly regard her highly. Nevertheless, there is still a lot more to do. The school recognises this.

Sport has a high profile at the school. Pupils enjoy participating in tournaments and representing the school. Nevertheless, the school has started to broaden its offer beyond the academic further in order to align with its vision of 'Life in all its fullness'. Pupils learn to play a range of musical instruments. Playground leaders and 'Values Champions' give pupils an active role in the running of the school, such as leading assemblies.

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

In the past pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), have not learned well. This was caused by an ill-defined curriculum. Staff were not given the necessary training to teach it effectively. As a result, in 2023 the vast majority of pupils transferred to secondary school without the essential knowledge and skills needed in reading, writing and mathematics.

On the transfer to the trust, it quickly reviewed the school's work using both internal checks and external audits. It accurately identified the severity of the situation. Its improvement plans are both cohesive and timely.

Above all, the trust recognised the urgent need to introduce a well-sequenced and ambitious curriculum from early years to Year 6 so that pupils would build on their learning in a logical order. This has helped to establish a coherent learning journey for pupils. For example, in science, detailed curriculum thinking means pupils' learning builds well over time. However, some subject plans need further refinement so that they more precisely identify the knowledge pupils need to know.

The school has put in place an extensive amount of training and support for staff to help them to teach well. This includes the accurate identification of pupils with SEND. Teachers have started to better adapt provision to meet pupils' needs.

Although the scale of changes has been significant, the school has balanced staff's workload and sought to reassure them of the rationale behind the changes. In

particular, the headteacher has been a calm, composed and well-respected figure throughout this time. Staff have received this support positively and are grateful for leaders helping to settle things down. As one member of staff described it, 'We have been on a rollercoaster'.

There is a clear initial impact to this work. Pupils have started to recall their knowledge over the long term. Teachers have begun to check how well pupils have remembered previous learning. In subjects such as mathematics and history, pupils can discuss their learning in increasing depth. However, they can still learn more. On some occasions teachers provide pupils with tasks that do not match the curriculum intent or are ambitious enough. Consequently, their depth of learning varies.

Reading is at the front and centre of the school's curriculum. It has introduced a more structured approach to the teaching of early reading. This starts in the Reception Year. Historically, too many pupils fell behind in reading and did not catch up. The school now has clear systems for identifying pupils who are struggling. Through targeted support, staff are helping these pupils to become fluent readers. However, while outcomes are rising, some staff require further support to help them teach reading in the agreed way. Sometimes they confuse pupils in their explanations or the help they give.

Pupils are well prepared for life in modern Britain. They talk with excitement about the upcoming trip to Bristol to learn about more diverse parts of the country. Pupils demonstrate great maturity and tolerance when discussing issues of discrimination, such as racism and sexism. They know about potential dangers in society, such as vaping.

Trustees and members of the local ethos and advisory committee have an accurate picture of the school. They are clear that while many improvements have been made, much of the work is at a relatively early stage.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The curriculum is at various stages of development. In some subjects, the trust has not precisely identified the important knowledge that pupils need to learn and remember. This means that pupils do not always build their knowledge well over time. The trust needs to ensure that all subjects identify the knowledge that pupils must learn and when.
- On some occasions teachers provide activities which do not match the curriculum intention or are ambitious enough. As a result, pupils do not learn some new knowledge securely. The trust must ensure that the work given to pupils closely

matches the curriculum intention, is ambitious and takes into account pupils' prior knowledge.

- Some staff do not have the necessary subject knowledge to deliver the phonics programme as the school intends. This means that some pupils do not learn to read quickly enough. The trust should ensure that staff are supported and trained to teach phonics in line with the school's agreed approaches.

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	144063
Local authority	Cornwall
Inspection number	10288221
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	120
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Joanne Tisdall
Headteacher	Deirdre Petersen
Website	marhamchurch-lap.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	8 June 2022, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school transferred to Learning Academy Partnership (South West) in November 2022.
- The headteacher joined the school in 2023.
- The school does not use any alternative provision.
- The school is designated as having a religious character. Its last Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools took place in 2022, when it received a judgement of good.

Information about this inspection

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

- Inspections are a point-in-time judgement about the quality of a school's education provision.

- Inspectors discussed any continued impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors met with trust executive leaders, the headteacher, groups of staff, groups of pupils, a representative from the diocese, trustees and members of the local ethos and advisory committee.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in English, mathematics and history. For each deep dive, inspectors held discussions about the curriculum, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- The lead inspector also discussed the curriculum and looked at samples of work in science and geography.
- 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 observed pupils' behaviour in lessons and around the school site.
- An inspector spoke to parents at the start of the school day. Inspectors also considered the responses to Ofsted Parent View.

Inspection team

Jason Edge, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Jonathan Gower

Ofsted Inspector

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