

Inspection of Ford End Church of England Primary School

Main Road, Ford End, Chelmsford, Essex CM3 1LQ

Inspection dates: 15 and 16 November 2023

Overall effectiveness	Good
The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Good
Early years provision	Good
Previous inspection grade	Not previously inspected under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

The head of school is Johanna Bailey. This school is part of LIFE Education Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer (CEO), Julian Dutnall, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Louise Douglas. There is also an executive headteacher, Melissa Taylor, who is responsible for this school and two others.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils at Ford End love their school. They talk about it being 'one big family'. Pupils of all ages like playing different games together at breaktime. They like the wide range of clubs available to them. Children in the early years settle in quickly. Older pupils look out for them at lunchtime and playtime. Pupils talk positively about sharing books with reading buddies across the school. Pupils behave well and are rarely distracted from learning. They feel safe.

Pupils enjoy their education. They want to learn, and they work hard. They value the different experiences that enhance their education, for example taking part in a 'mythical beasts day' with other schools that they work closely with. As a result of regular activities with these schools, pupils feel part of a larger group. An example of a typical pupil comment is: 'I like how the LIFE schools come together, bring out our confidence to meet others and make friends.'

Pupils take on a wide range of responsibilities. The members of the school council organise assemblies about issues that are important to them. For example, they brought the whole school together to consider how they could reduce food waste.

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

The school works very closely with two other schools in the multi-academy trust. Subject leaders work across all three schools. Teachers also regularly collaborate with colleagues teaching the same curriculum and year groups in the other schools. This has enabled leaders to share subject expertise and reduce teachers' workload.

The school's curriculum is comprehensive. It is very detailed and provides high levels of guidance for teachers on how to teach the planned objectives. The use of reading and learning core vocabulary is woven throughout. The curriculum ensures pupils access a broad and balanced mix of learning. Teachers make sure that pupils learn through a range of activities, with regular drama and outdoor learning part of that mix.

English learning centres around high-quality books and texts. Pupils engage well with individual copies of the texts or with teachers sharing the picture books on a large screen. The school's approach to teaching early reading using phonics is clear. Pupils confidently use the strategies they have learned to read unfamiliar words. All pupils regularly read with adults. Those who need extra help to avoid falling behind get targeted additional support in comprehension and phonics.

Where writing is taught the most effectively, pupils produce written pieces of a high standard. However, there are times when the teaching of writing can be disjointed and pupils tackle too many different types of writing in a short time. This means that pupils do not secure understanding of the writing technique studied. The quality of pupils' handwriting is also variable. Some pupils are not developing their handwriting

fast enough. Some younger pupils have too many letters not placed correctly on the line. This detracts from the quality of pupils' written work.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) have their needs identified, with clear plans in place to make sure these are addressed. Some of the classes are very small. In these, teachers adapt activities as they go to meet individual needs. In the other classes, additional adult support is highly focused on the core areas of English and mathematics. This ensures that pupils with SEND make strong progress.

Pupils' behaviour is excellent. Pupils feel highly valued by the adults. They know that if they were worried or upset, the adults will listen and sort things out. Until part-way through last academic year, attendance was not good enough. Too many pupils were not in school to learn. However, the school has completely changed this. Attending school is now seen as important and crucial for pupils' learning. Virtually all pupils now have high attendance.

The school creates lots of opportunities for pupils to develop their talents and interests. There are many trips out and visitors to the school. Pupils have a strong sense of how democracy works. Pupils have many responsibilities, several elected by the school as a whole. The school works closely with community groups, raising money for charities and supporting a local food bank.

Governors, trustees and trust officers have a detailed understanding of the rapid improvements in the quality of education in the last year. Staff feel part of both a close-knit team at the school and a larger one within the three schools and the wider trust. They have many opportunities to develop their own careers and teaching skills. Parents recognise recent improvements and a strong majority now recommend the school.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The order in which pupils are taught writing skills and understanding of different genres is not always coherent. This means that sometimes pupils learn about one technique and then move on to another before they have had the chance to practise it in their writing. The school needs to ensure that the teaching of writing enables pupils to build up their writing skills effectively over time.
- Too many older pupils do not have age-appropriate joined handwriting. Too many younger pupils place their letters incorrectly in relation to the line. This means that pupils are not developing strong, fluent skills to help them complete written

work quickly and accurately. The school needs to ensure that pupils are taught to handwrite correctly.

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	148210
Local authority	Essex
Inspection number	10287133
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	68
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Louise Douglas
CEO of the trust	Julian Dutnall
Headteacher	Melissa Taylor (Executive headteacher)
Website	www.fordendschool.com
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- This school opened in December 2020. It is part of the LIFE Education Trust.
- Ford End Church of England Primary School converted to become an academy in December 2020. When its predecessor school, of the same name, was last inspected by Ofsted, it was judged to be good overall.
- The school's last section 48 inspection (Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools) was in November 2021. The next inspection is due in 2026/27.
- Both the executive headteacher and the head of school took up their posts in April 2023.
- The school works closely with two local schools, Margaretting Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School and Roxwell Church of England Primary School. They share an executive headteacher and SEND coordinator. Some other leadership responsibilities are also shared between the schools.
- The school has its own local governing body. This supports the work of the trustees.
- The school does not use any alternative provision.

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.
- 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 met with the executive headteacher and the head of school. They met with subject leaders and teachers. They met with members of the local governing body and the chair of trustees. They spoke with the CEO of the trust and a diocesan officer by telephone.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English; early reading; mathematics; and art and design. For each subject, inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, looked at pupils' work and spoke with teachers and pupils.
- Inspectors visited a range of other subject lessons and looked at a wide range of curriculum plans.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the 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 considered the 15 responses to Ofsted's online survey, Ofsted Parent View. They also considered the six responses to the Ofsted pupil survey and the seven responses to the Ofsted survey for school staff.

Inspection team

Tessa Holledge, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Nicola Shadbolt

Ofsted Inspector

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