

Seva School

Link House, Eden Road, Walsgrave Triangle, Coventry CV2 2TB

Inspection dates

21–22 September 2016

Overall effectiveness	Inadequate
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Inadequate
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Requires improvement
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Inadequate
Outcomes for pupils	Requires improvement
Early years provision	Inadequate
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an inadequate school

- For too long, leaders, governors and staff have been unable to agree on a vision for the school. Trust and communication have broken down. This is stopping the school from working efficiently and restricts improvement.
- Systems for holding staff to account have not worked with sufficient rigour. This means some jobs are not being done properly.
- Some staff obstruct the work of others. While it is hard to get to the truth behind some reported instances of disagreement or disharmony, it is clear that some staff think that other staff or the governors have treated them unfairly. This has created rifts, damaged morale and limits everyone's ability to get on with their work.
- The governors have sought advice about how to improve their effectiveness. So far, however, they have been unable to bring about the necessary improvements or ensure that all statutory duties are met.
- Checks on staff suitability are not carried out swiftly enough and pupils' records are not kept up to date. While pupils feel secure at school, this lack of urgency when dealing with critical information about adults and children means that arrangements for safeguarding and ensuring pupils' welfare are inadequate.
- Several governors, leaders and staff have left because of division at all levels.
- The quality of assessment requires improvement. Currently, it is erratic and leads to teaching that does not meet pupils' different learning needs with sufficient precision.
- While pupils' progress in some year groups is good, this is not the case across the whole school. Staff do not have access to enough information about pupils' needs. This limits their ability to plan for some groups.
- The early years provision is inadequate because of failings in whole-school safeguarding processes. In most other aspects, the early years provision is improving.

The school has the following strengths

- Pupils' conduct is good. Pupils want to learn, are attentive in class and work hard.
- Academic standards are above average.
- Pupils understand the difference between right and wrong, show respect to their teachers and get on well with their peers.

Full report

In accordance with section 44(1) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires special measures because it is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the persons responsible for leading, managing or governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Urgently improve leadership, management and governance by:
 - resolving the misunderstanding, misplaced priorities and lack of trust that exist between leaders, governors and staff
 - improving communication and cooperation across the school community
 - agreeing upon a permanent leadership structure
 - ensuring that roles and responsibilities of governors, leaders and staff are clearly understood and that no one exceeds their authority or neglects their duties
 - making sure that systems for managing staff performance are sufficiently rigorous and applied with fairness and consistency
 - ensuring that the requirement to publish information about how the school meets its public sector equality duty is published on the school's website.
- An external review of governance should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.
- Make sure that all statutory safeguarding requirements are met in order to ensure pupils' safety and welfare across the whole school by:
 - urgently carrying out all the required checks on staff
 - making sure that pupils' school records, including admissions, medical information, academic performance and home contact details, are kept up to date and accessible to the right people at the right time
 - making sure that all staff understand their duty of care to safeguard pupils and do not obstruct this vital aspect of the school's work.
- Improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment across the curriculum so that all groups of pupils, especially the most able and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, make the best possible progress, by:
 - implementing consistent, reliable and effective assessment procedures in all year groups, including the early years
 - making sure that staff have access to regular training and feedback about the quality of their work.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Inadequate

- The leaders and governors have been unable to agree on how the school should be run. This has led to disharmony and division across the whole school community, which has damaged morale, ruined team spirit and derailed school improvement plans.
- Over the past 12 months, several different school leaders have come and gone, some at short notice. It is hard to know the exact cause of all the disagreements or reasons for leaving. It is clear, however, that among the current staff and parent body, there are many strongly held feelings and split loyalties. Some think the school is now doing much better after a difficult year, while others are critical and believe the school is in decline. Current leaders, new in post, are trying to pick up the pieces of this difficult situation that they have inherited.
- Some staff obstruct the work of others. Others just want to 'keep their heads down' and get on with their jobs. In all cases, systems for checking on the work of teachers, teaching assistants and administrative staff are ineffective. Performance management systems are embryonic and have not been fully implemented. Consequently, staff have not received consistent and constructive feedback or been held to account for the quality of their work. This has led to some staff doing what they want, rather than what they should. In the middle of this, critical information about staff and pupils has been overlooked, misplaced or not acted upon with necessary urgency.
- Some members of the school community and parent body believe that the curriculum is too narrow and that extreme religious views are being promoted at the school. The inspection found no evidence of this. In fact, the curriculum on offer is broad and balanced, and clearly promotes British values. Religious education covers a wide range of faiths and pupils have numerous opportunities to consider and discuss the importance of fairness, democracy and respect for themselves and others. Daily prayers are spoken in Punjabi, but this is not compulsory and a moderate approach is taken when teaching about the Sikh faith. Some staff do wear Kirpans (ceremonial daggers) in school. Inspectors found that the school had drawn up guidelines and carried out risk assessments for this practice.
- Leaders have not published all the required information about how they ensure equality at the school. However, inspectors found that pupils do have equal access to all aspects of the curriculum.
- While the curriculum is suitably broad, the frequent changes of staff over the past year have led to significant variations in classroom practice. Support and training have been disrupted and record-keeping has been haphazard. Staff have received some training, such as that required under the 'Prevent' duty, but training connected with teaching and learning has not followed a coherent programme.
- Pupil premium funds, the primary sports fund and the Year 7 catch-up premium are all used in line with their intended purposes and are having a positive impact. The sport money pays for specialist teaching in school and to develop a 'game zone' at lunchtimes, when sports teachers come into school to work with pupils and staff. The playground facilities are still under development, so the 'game zone' has yet to get

going. The school also funds transport to a local sports centre and organises regular swimming lessons. Leaders' analysis of how well the small number of disadvantaged pupils are doing is well organised and evaluative.

- School leaders have sought external support and some of the advice received and recommendations made have been acted upon. But, once again, poor communication and the sudden and swift changes of key staff have hindered leaders' ability to drive the school forwards at an acceptable pace.

Governance of the school

- The governance of the school is ineffective.
- Governors have not been united in their views about how the school should be run. Some governors have been distrustful of others and their motives for being a governor. This caused a split in the governing body and led to some governors resigning.
- While these disagreements and in-fighting have been going on, governors have been distracted from their core purpose. They have been made aware, through an external review in spring 2016, of an urgent need to improve governance in order to provide organised strategic direction and fulfil all statutory duties. However, to date, they have been unable to bring about all the necessary improvements.
- Currently, governors have not ensured that all safeguarding requirements are met and, at the end of the summer term 2016, there was a complete breakdown of trust between the governing body and the school leadership. The executive principal was removed from her post and, at the time of this inspection, a permanent leadership structure had yet to be confirmed.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are not effective.
- Poor communication and confusion about roles and responsibilities mean that staff and pupils' records have not been updated in a timely manner. Some records about pupils have been left in cupboards or box files, so staff have not had access to key information about pupils' performance, contact details or needs. In addition, some staff personnel files are incomplete. While all of these matters could be resolved quite quickly, and current leaders are alert to the urgency of this, the uncooperative culture in the school is a huge hindrance. Some staff are distracted by divisions within the adult workforce and have forgotten that their first duty is to safeguard pupils. Weaknesses in accountability systems have allowed this to go unnoticed and unchecked.
- During this inspection, some staff reported that child-protection procedures had not been followed correctly. This inspection found no concrete evidence to support this allegation but the division in opinion about the matter is indicative of the divided loyalties and misplaced priorities at the school.
- On a day-to-day basis, pupils feel safe and secure at school and adults treat them with firm kindness and respect. First-aid procedures operate efficiently and pupils are taught how to keep themselves safe. During this inspection, pupils were seen learning about online safety and the risks associated with different situations. Pupils who spoke with inspectors could talk in an informed way about safety matters and how the school helps them to understand and avoid danger.

- Staff have been appropriately trained in the 'Prevent' duty and understand their responsibilities in recognising and reporting signs of radicalisation and extremism.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- Assessment across the school is erratic. Different systems operate in different parts of the school and school leaders are aware that improvements are needed. These weaknesses in assessment, coupled with the numerous changes of staff, have resulted in teaching that meets pupils' different needs with varying degrees of success.
- There is no weak teaching in the school, but training, advice and support for teachers have been piecemeal. In the absence of consistency and routine, teachers have done their best to give pupils the education they deserve. There is no doubt that, despite all the disagreement between the adults at school, pupils have been kept occupied and continued to work hard. Even so, some groups of pupils, notably the most able and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, are not making the progress that they should. This is because teachers are not sufficiently well informed about their needs and capabilities. On top of this, staff morale has dipped, which has led to above-average levels of absence and left some staff feeling overburdened by their workload and ill-prepared for the work expected from them. Several staff express optimism that things will get better but, in places, a sense of frustration, anxiety and resentment is palpable.
- Nevertheless, in some classes, teaching is very effective. During this inspection, numerous instances of well-pitched teaching were observed and, in all classes, pupils were attentive and engaged. Teaching gives particular attention to developing pupils' social skills, emotional well-being and sense of responsibility. In Year 4, for example, pupils were provided with some well-chosen pictures that prompted them to think carefully about the impact of their words and actions on others. Pupils responded with mature thoughtfulness and empathy. In another example, pupils considered the influence of the Ancient Greeks on democratic processes today. Pupils had plenty of opportunities to put forward their own ideas and took part in a well-reasoned debate as they considered the benefits of a fair society, the dangers of prejudice and the values that guide communities. The willingness of pupils to contribute ideas, their attentiveness to teachers, and their positive work ethic are typical features in all classrooms.
- Homework is an established routine in all year groups and parents and pupils report that the school sets 'a lot of homework'. Pupils' conscientious attitudes ensure that homework is usually completed on time and presented with care.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Inadequate

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is inadequate.
- The whole-school failings in safeguarding, which stem from misunderstood priorities and poor communication, mean that, at the time of this inspection, school leaders had not done enough to ensure pupils' welfare and safety.

- A few parents expressed concern about the school's procedures for responding to accidents or upsets at school. As already stated, this inspection revealed some significant problems in the way the school handles key information about pupils. However, inspectors' checks on the school's behaviour records and procedures for responding to accidents found that these systems worked as they should. Any poor behaviour is followed up quickly and first-aid attention and communication with parents are recorded properly.
- Pupils report that they feel safe at school. The school site is kept secure and bullying of any sort is uncommon. Relationships between pupils of different ages and backgrounds are positive. In class, and on the playground, everyone mixes well and unkind behaviour rarely happens. When it does, it is challenged in a constructive way and stopped.
- Pupils are articulate and interested learners. They show initiative in lessons, are keen to do their best and want to succeed.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- In class, outside, and when moving about the school site, pupils' conduct is good. They are polite and respectful to adults and take heed of polite reminders from staff to stay to the left on the stairs or to adjust their school uniform if it is untidy. Pupils are calm and cheerful and get on well with one another.
- Attendance and other pupils' records are not updated promptly enough, but inspectors found no evidence that attendance levels were a cause for concern. Attendance at school is broadly in line with the national average and lateness or persistent absence are both rare.
- Pupils work very hard in lessons and, when asked to take on specific responsibilities, they do so with a strong sense of duty. In key stage 2, some pupils are part of the class 'job squad'. In key stage 3, class monitors and the head boy and girl step up to their duties with pride and enthusiasm. Across the school, pupils show that they understand the difference between right and wrong.
- The school site is clean and tidy and pupils make the most of the temporary, and limited, playground space available.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- Academic standards at the school are above average, although progress rates vary. In some year groups, such as Year 5 and Year 8, progress rates in several subjects, including reading, writing, mathematics and science, are good. However, the numerous staff changes, and an inconsistent approach to checking on the progress of different groups of pupils, make it hard for school leaders and inspectors to get a complete view of progress across the school.
- What is clear, however, is that poor communication and shortcomings in whole-school assessment routines have restricted the availability of information about pupils. In some instances, staff did not know about the progress of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities because they did not have access to the pupils'

records. In other instances, some of the most able pupils tackled work at the same level as lower-ability pupils and marked time rather than racing ahead. Having said this, there are also instances of the very brightest pupils doing remarkably well. The problem at this school is that it is all rather hit or miss. In some classes, pupils make great strides forward due to very effective teaching; in other classes, progress is slower.

- Reading is taught with success. In the Year 1 letters and sounds screening check, the proportions of pupils reaching the expected standard have been above national figures each year since the school opened. Pupils who read to inspectors employed efficient reading skills and displayed an interest in books.
- The only end-of-key-stage published data for the school is from key stage 1. This is because there are no pupils in Year 6 or Year 11. The end-of-Year-2 data shows that standards in reading, writing and mathematics were above average in 2015 and 2016. Work in books from across the school also indicates that pupils are acquiring and using literacy and numeracy skills in a number of different subjects, including history, geography, personal, social and health education and the creative arts.
- The numbers of disadvantaged pupils at the school are small but, by and large, these pupils do well given their different starting points.
- Overall academic standards do not give cause for significant concern and pupils move up into the next year group with sufficient knowledge and understanding to cope with the work ahead of them. However, progress for the most able and for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is slowed by inefficient assessment.

Early years provision

Inadequate

- As whole-school safeguarding processes are inadequate, this pulls down the grade for the provision in the early years. In all other respects, the early years provision is not inadequate, although several aspects require improvement. Leaders have a well-informed and accurate view about the improvements needed, which centre upon teaching, learning and assessment.
- The most recent assessment information shows that about two thirds of children reached a good level of development at the end of the Reception Year, which is in line with national figures. While this is reasonable progress from their starting points and they are adequately prepared for key stage 1, the leader for early years recognises that the children could make stronger progress. To this end, she has reviewed and reorganised assessment systems with a view to making sure that activities are more closely aligned with children's specific needs and interests. Evidence gathered during this inspection indicates that she is on the right track with her plans.
- The majority of children start school with levels of knowledge and skill in line with those typical for their age. They adapt quickly to the school's routines and the adults who teach and care for them do so in a kindly, encouraging and attentive manner. Consequently, children come to enjoy school and appear happy, relaxed and secure when in class and at play.
- Children's behaviour is good. There are plenty of smiles and laughter as children enjoy one another's company and play and explore together. They also show the ability to

concentrate and persevere at tasks, are responsive to requests from adults and try to help others when they can.

- As well as acquiring important early literacy and numeracy skills, children have access to many creative and exploratory activities that fuel their curiosity and imagination. They also learn good habits, such as washing their hands before snack time and taking responsibility for tidying things away.
- The majority of parents who spoke with inspectors reported that they were happy with induction arrangements when their children first started school. They also described staff as approachable and welcoming.

School details

Unique reference number	141104
Local authority	Coventry
Inspection number	10022435

The inspection was carried out at short notice under section 8(2) of the Education Act 2005 (the Act) in response to concerns that had been brought to Ofsted's attention. The inspection was subsequently deemed a full section 5 inspection under section 9 of the Act.

Type of school	All-through
School category	Academy free school
Age range of pupils	4 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	279
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Maureen Martin
Headteachers	Ms Jane Morgan, head of primary phase Mr Kulwant Atakar, head of secondary phase
Telephone number	02477 987619
Website	http://sevaleducationtrust.org
Email address	contact@sevaschool.com
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- The Seva School opened as a free school in September 2014. Currently, there are pupils in the Reception Year, key stage 1, and Years 3 to 5 in the primary phase. In the secondary phase, there are pupils in Years 7 and 8.
- It is smaller in size than most all-through schools.
- The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds is well above the national average. The majority of pupils are from Asian backgrounds.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils at the school is well below the national average.

- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is below the national average.
- The school offers full-time early years provision for reception-age children.
- The school does not comply with DfE guidance on what academies should publish about compliance with the public sector equality duty, including accessibility arrangements for disabled pupils.
- The school does not meet requirements on the publication of information about compliance with the public sector equality duty.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching and learning in most classes. The inspectors also examined pupils' work in books, and considered school test and assessment information.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour, and the school's procedures, at the beginning of the school day, at lunch and breaktimes, and when pupils were moving about the school site and getting ready for trips out of school.
- Meetings were held with pupils, staff, senior and middle leaders, parents and governors.
- By the end of the inspection, there were 35 recent responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire (Parent View). The inspectors noted these and also spoke with parents during the second day of the inspection. In addition, inspectors spoke with several parents on the telephone and received two letters from parents.
- A number of school documents were examined. These included information about pupils' achievement, evaluations of the school's performance and numerous policy statements. Records relating to governance, staff performance management, training, the quality of teaching, external support, behaviour, admissions, attendance, safety and safeguarding were also scrutinised. The school's website was also checked.

Inspection team

Martin Pye, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Sandy Hayes	Her Majesty's Inspector
Geraint Evans	Her Majesty's Inspector

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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. www.gov.uk/pupil-premium-information-for-schools-and-alternative-provision-settings.

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