

Inspection of The Abbey Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School, St Albans

Grove Road, St Albans, Hertfordshire AL1 1DQ

Inspection dates: 24–25 September 2019

Overall effectiveness **Good**

The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Good
Early years provision	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Outstanding

What is it like to attend this school?

This is an inclusive and welcoming school. Pupils told us that school is like being part of a big family. The school's positive ethos contributes well to building a sense of community. Core values promote pupils' understanding of how to get on well together. Pupils reflect these values through their relationships with one another and with staff. As one pupil said to us, 'It is easy to make friends here.'

Teachers expect the pupils to behave and work hard in lessons. Pupils enjoy the activities planned by the teachers. In lessons, we saw pupils explaining their ideas and sharing their views confidently. Most pupils concentrate and are keen to do well. Occasionally, a few pupils become distracted when the work is too easy.

Pupils told us that they like many things about their school. Music is a favourite subject. Pupils really look forward to singing, either in school or at the cathedral. All pupils learn an instrument and many are proud to be members of the school orchestra.

Pupils feel safe and well cared for. They understand the different forms bullying can take. They told us that bullying was rare in their school. Pupils trust adults to sort out any concerns or worries.

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

In many subjects, leaders have thought about what pupils should learn. Leaders and teachers plan lessons in a logical sequence. They identify what pupils need to know at different points in each year group. For example, in history, leaders have thought carefully about the sequences in learning across Years 3 to 6. Pupils gain an accurate understanding of chronology and the order in which events have happened in the past.

This is not consistent in all subjects, especially in science and art. In these subjects, leaders have identified what they want pupils to learn but pupils' work is not well sequenced so that they build on what they already know. As a result, the work pupils carry out is sometimes too easy. For example, although pupils in Year 5 knew how to make circuits, the only work they were required to do in their books was to label a circuit. Pupils who are capable of understanding more in science are not being given opportunities to do so.

The teaching of early reading is effective. Teachers all use the same approach to teaching reading. This helps pupils to use their skills and knowledge of phonics (letters and the sounds they make) to read accurately and fluently.

The new reading programme in key stage 2 is taught effectively. Teachers choose a good range of books so that pupils access a range of literature. Pupils told inspectors that they enjoy reading. However, teachers do not make sure that pupils build on this enjoyment of reading. Pupils in some year groups are being given

regular opportunities to read independently. This is not the same picture for pupils in all year groups.

In most subjects, pupils who fall behind catch up quickly because they receive extra help when they need it. This includes some pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Teachers and teaching assistants know how to support these pupils. This helps pupils to be successful in their learning.

Leaders aim to support pupils' social development. Pupils learn about citizenship through pupil councils. They find out about how democracy works when voting for class representatives. They discuss ways to raise money for different charities or how to improve the school. Different clubs promote good health and why it is important to be active. Leaders ensure that a range of clubs build on pupils' interests, such as gardening, photography and robotics.

There are many new subject leaders. Not all leaders have developed the skills to track how well teachers are implementing leaders' plans. New leaders are developing action plans to identify what they need to do first.

Governors have a good knowledge of the school. They check that the school's vision is at the heart of the curriculum. Governors ensure that teachers are well supported to manage their workload.

Children get off to a good start in the early years. Leaders are knowledgeable about how to help children learn to read and write. They develop children's language by asking questions during children's play. Adults encourage children to provide greater detail during their discussions. Children's spoken language is rapidly improving.

The classrooms and outdoor areas are thoughtfully planned. Different areas are designed to promote children's curiosity and imagination. Consequently, children are happy. They play well together. This helps to develop their confidence and independence.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Safeguarding has a high priority for leaders. Staff are well trained and know how to identify any signs that pupils may be at risk from harm. They know how to report their concerns using the school's systems. Safeguarding is discussed at all the meetings adults attend. This ensures that they receive regular updates on changes in policies or legal guidance.

Governors carry out regular visits to check the policies and systems for keeping pupils safe. External services have been used to audit the school's safeguarding procedures. The school's records are well maintained. The checks carried out on those who work or visit the school are thorough.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The school's curriculum is not yet coherently planned in some subjects, especially art and science. The plans for these subjects do not help build pupils' knowledge sequentially. The plans do not consider what pupils already know and can do. Occasionally, work is therefore too easy for pupils. Leaders need to ensure that the content of all the subject plans is well chosen, sequenced and implemented so that pupils are challenged to know more and remember more over time.
- Some subject leaders are new to their positions of responsibility. They do not monitor and evaluate whether pupils are accessing aspects of the curriculum well enough. Leaders should ensure that subject leaders receive the training they require to carry out their roles successfully.

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 Ofsted Parent View information 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're 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	117449
Local authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	10110336
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	210
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Katie Wright
Headteacher	Emma Fenn
Website	www.abbey.herts.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	26 September 2008

Information about this school

- The Abbey Church of England Primary School is a Church of England faith school located in the Diocese of St Albans. The religious character of the school was inspected under section 48 of the Education Act (2005) in May 2018 and was judged to be outstanding.
- The school is an average-sized primary school.
- A breakfast club and an after-school care club are managed by an external provider.

Information about this inspection

We carried out this inspection under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We deemed the inspection a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

- Inspectors met with the headteacher, the deputy headteacher, who is also the leader of the early years and key stage 1, and the special educational needs coordinator. Inspectors held discussions with governors and had a telephone conversation with a representative from the local authority.
- During the inspection, inspectors carried out deep dives into early reading,

writing, science and history. This included discussions with leaders of the subject, visits to lessons, discussion with teachers about the subject, scrutiny of pupils' class books in the subject and discussions with pupils about the subject.

- Inspectors reviewed a wide range of safeguarding documentation, including that relating to attendance and behaviour, the single central record and records of staff training. Inspectors spoke about safeguarding with the designated leader of safeguarding, other school leaders and staff.
- Inspectors spoke with parents as they brought their children to school. Inspectors observed and spoke to pupils at playtimes and lunchtimes.

Inspection team

Steve Mellors, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Lesley Daniel

Ofsted Inspector

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