

# Inspection of Ponsbourne St Mary's Church of England Primary School

Newgate Street Village, Hertford, Hertfordshire SG13 8RA

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Inspection dates: 9–10 October 2019

**Overall effectiveness** **Good**

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

## **What is it like to attend this school?**

The school is at the heart of the community. Leaders work closely with the neighbouring church and nearby charity groups. Pupils enjoy taking part in local activities such as the annual village show.

Pupils and staff liken the school to 'a happy family' and feel well supported. Most parents are positive about the quality of education that the school provides. They feel that their children make good progress within a nurturing and caring environment.

The school's values, including love, forgiveness and hope, thread through every aspect of school life. Most pupils understand that demonstrating these values will 'help to make the world a better place'.

Pupils are friendly and polite. They work well together in lessons. Pupils share their ideas and offer a helping hand to their friends. Pupils are respectful to staff and to one another.

Pupils feel safe in school. They are taught how to deal with risks they may face, for example, when using the internet. They know that if they have any worries they can talk to their 'Ponsbourne partner', who is a trusted member of staff. Pupils say that bullying does not happen. We agree that staff would deal with any such incidents quickly should they occur.

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

Leaders make sure that the curriculum is broad and balanced. English and mathematics are taught effectively. Teachers use their strong subject knowledge to sequence tasks that help pupils to build on their knowledge and understanding. In most other subjects, including history, geography and science, the curriculum is well planned. Pupils are supported to make links and learn deeply, applying what they know already to new work. For example, in geography, the youngest children make simple picture maps of their outdoor area. In key stage 1, pupils learn to label maps with the countries of the United Kingdom. Older pupils remember this knowledge and use it to correctly locate Viking settlements in the United Kingdom.

Leaders are reviewing the curriculum plans of subjects such as art and modern foreign languages to make sure that teachers provide pupils with clear sequences of knowledge and skills to secure their learning. Leaders have chosen a range of resources to develop curriculum plans and support the teaching of all subjects. However, leaders do not check closely enough that teachers are using these approaches consistently throughout the school, ensuring that pupils' knowledge and skills always build on previous learning.

The teaching of reading is a priority. Starting in the Reception class, and throughout key stage 1, pupils develop their phonics skills through structured activities that

build their confidence and understanding. Well-trained staff encourage pupils to persist when tackling unfamiliar words. Consequently, pupils make good progress with their reading. Most pupils become fluent readers by the end of key stage 2.

Pupils' attitudes to learning are generally positive, as is reflected in the good progress they make. Pupils appreciate that their teachers 'go over what we know already at the beginning of lessons because this helps us to remember what we already know.'

Leaders and staff prepare pupils for life in modern Britain through the school's inclusive ethos, where everyone is valued. Leaders and staff make sure that pupils have a good understanding of world faiths, customs and culture. Additionally, pupils make good use of the varied experiences planned for them. For example, in a history lesson, Year 5 and 6 pupils were using what they had learned during a recent residential trip to York to identify various Anglo-Saxon artefacts.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are supported effectively to work alongside their peers. Staff plan learning for pupils with SEND carefully so that pupils can make good progress from their various starting points.

Children get off to a good start in early years. Staff form positive relationships with children. This means both Nursery and Reception children learn routines and understand expectations quickly. Staff teach children early reading, writing and number skills from the very start. Effective teaching and accurate assessment ensure that children develop these skills well. As a result, most children reach a good level of development by the time they leave early years and are ready for Year 1.

There is a positive sense of teamwork in the school. Staff appreciate the training they are given and leaders' support for their well-being. Leaders and staff are keen to work with other local schools to share best practice and improve further.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

There is a strong culture of safeguarding at the school. Leaders, staff and governors ensure that pupils are safe and happy. Appropriate checks are made on staff, governors, volunteers and regular visitors to the school to make sure that they are suitable people to work with children. These checks are recorded meticulously. Staff and governors receive regular training covering different aspects of safeguarding. As a result, staff know exactly what to do if they are concerned about a pupil's welfare. Leaders ensure that support is provided for vulnerable pupils and their families, including from staff and outside agencies.

## What does the school need to do to improve?

### (Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In subjects such as art and modern foreign languages, leaders' plans do not clearly identify the order in which knowledge and skills should be taught. Additionally, the connections between previous and new learning are not defined well. Leaders should complete their review of all curriculum plans, ensuring that these provide clear a structure for teachers to help pupils build well on their previous learning across all subjects.
- Leaders need to monitor that teachers are using the school's chosen teaching approaches consistently throughout the school and make sure that these have a long-lasting effect on improving pupils' outcomes.

## 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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	117396
<b>Local authority</b>	Hertfordshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	10110334
<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary controlled
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3 to 11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	104
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair of governing body</b>	Wayne Morris
<b>Headteacher</b>	Dorothy Marlow
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.ponsbourne.herts.sch.uk">www.ponsbourne.herts.sch.uk</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	15–16 June 2009

## Information about this school

- The school is much smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- The school is part of the diocese of St Albans.
- As a school designated as having a religious character, it was subject to a separate section 48 inspection of its denominational religious education, school ethos and content of collective worship in September 2014.
- Most pupils are White British.
- The school offers a breakfast and after-school club each day during term time.
- The current headteacher joined the school in September 2014.

## 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.

- As part of this inspection, inspectors held meetings with the headteacher, who is also the special educational needs coordinator, and the deputy headteacher, who is also the art leader. Both the headteacher and deputy headteacher are

designated safeguarding leaders. Inspectors met with the mathematics leader and the school business manager.

- The lead inspector met with the chair of the governing body, and another governor. Additionally, the lead inspector held a phone conversation with a local authority adviser to discuss their work with the school.
- The subjects of reading, mathematics, science, history, geography and art were considered as part of this inspection. Inspectors spoke to curriculum leaders, visited lessons, looked at a range of pupils' work and met with teachers and pupils. Inspectors also observed some pupils reading to staff and talked to pupils about their reading habits.
- Inspectors spoke to pupils informally in class and around the school at breaktimes to seek their views about the school. Inspectors attended the school's breakfast club and an assembly.
- Inspectors scrutinised the school's website and a range of school documents, including the school's own evaluation, improvement plans, minutes from governing body meetings and records about behaviour, safeguarding children and attendance.
- Inspectors considered the 55 responses made by parents to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire and three emails received from parents. Inspectors also spoke to some parents at the start of the school day.

### **Inspection team**

Fiona Webb, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Simon Harbrow

Ofsted Inspector

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