

Inspection of a good school: Wittersham Church of England Primary School

The Street, Wittersham, Tenterden, Kent TN30 7EA

Inspection date: 28 January 2020

Outcome

Wittersham Church of England Primary School continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

This is a happy and welcoming school. Christian values and a strong sense of community lie at the heart of this village school. Staff have caring relationships with pupils and know their families well. Pupils respond positively to leaders' high expectations. Pupils want to do well, and they learn to persevere and not give up. They thrive within this trusting and harmonious environment.

Parents and carers, pupils and staff unanimously agree that pupils are safe. An atmosphere of respect and kindness permeates the school. The headteacher and other staff are always there for pupils or parents to talk to. Pupils are confident that any worries they have will be resolved. Pupils behave well. They say there is no bullying in the school and incidents of poor behaviour are rare.

Pupils work with great enthusiasm in lessons and many attend the wide selection of clubs on offer. During lessons and through their extra-curricular activities, pupils develop skills and build self-confidence. They take part in a range of sports and activities that promote healthy and active living. The school has achieved the Schools Games Gold Award and an award from The Arts Society in recognition of the opportunities the school provides for pupils.

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

Leaders, governors and staff have the highest expectations of pupils' learning and behaviour. Pupils' performance in national tests in English and mathematics is above national levels. The headteacher, ably assisted by the assistant headteacher, has united and inspired the school community. This has led to improvements across the school. Nevertheless, leaders are not complacent and know there is room for further improvement.

Reading is a priority at this school. Reception Year children get off to a good start with their reading, helped by strong links with the local nursery school. A focus on rhyme and

stories helps to develop children's pre-reading skills. The teaching of phonics is well organised and largely effective. Some staff would benefit from further training in phonics to ensure that they have exactly the right knowledge and skills to help pupils even more. Pupils read often and enjoy listening to stories. Pupils are given suitable books to read. Those who fall behind with reading are given effective help. As pupils move through the school, teachers use effective strategies to help secure their skills and instil a love of reading.

The curriculum beyond mathematics and English interests pupils and encourages them to learn. In science and history, there is a strong focus on practical work and exciting, memorable experiences. However, in science and the foundation subjects, pupils' knowledge and skills are not built as securely over time as they are in mathematics and English. Leaders are taking the right steps to improve learning in other subjects. Subject leaders have devised plans so that pupils learn the right things in a sensible order. Senior leaders are providing effective training for subject leaders to help them further develop each subject. Well-planned training for teachers to improve how they teach different subjects is under way.

Teachers make sure that disadvantaged pupils and pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) get the help they need. They are well supported in class and get additional sessions to give them extra practice when required. The oversight of pupils who are vulnerable to underachievement has recently been strengthened. Plans are under way to ensure that support for these pupils is even more effective.

Staff have high expectations of pupils' behaviour during lessons and playtime. Misbehaviour is rare because lessons are interesting, and pupils want to learn. Attendance is above the national average.

Leaders are committed to the development of 'the whole child'. The curriculum emphasises the development of pupils' character and qualities such as resilience. Improving pupils' oracy is a focus, so that pupils can express themselves fluently.

The leadership of the school is driven by a strong moral purpose to help every pupil do their best. All pupils are known as individuals from the first day they start at the school. Leaders act with integrity. The numbers of pupils at the school is growing, and new pupils are made welcome and settle quickly.

All of the staff are proud to work at the school. They are highly positive about leaders' concern for their workload and well-being. Staff are fully committed to the school. As this is a small school, each teacher carries a number of responsibilities. Leaders, including governors, take care that improvements and new initiatives are introduced at a steady pace, so that the workforce is not overwhelmed.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

The headteacher is the designated safeguarding officer. She leads with compassion and sensitivity and staff follow her lead.

Leaders ensure that pupils' safety and welfare have high priority and that staff are well trained. Staff know the pupils really well. This means that they can spot any concerns straight away and act upon them. Records are carefully organised, and information is shared quickly with external agencies when needed. Leaders take appropriate action, making sure that pupils and their families receive the support they need.

The school provides helpful information and guidance about safeguarding for parents and pupils.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Pupils do not always remember key knowledge associated with the study of science and the foundation subjects. This is because teachers are not always clear about the concepts and vocabulary to be emphasised and revisited. The subject plans, which currently show how topics should be sequenced, need a greater emphasis on the subject-specific knowledge that pupils need to acquire and use.
- Teachers' and subject leaders' subject-specific expertise is stronger in English and mathematics than in some other subjects. As a result, the implementation of plans to help pupils learn and remember more across the curriculum is variable. Leaders should continue the training in pedagogical content and subject leadership that is already under way.
- Leaders are determined that pupils learn to read well. Further training is necessary to strengthen teachers' and support staff's understanding of how to teach phonics. This is to ensure that there is a consistent approach to early reading right across the school.

Background

When we have judged a school to be good we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains good. This is called a section 8 inspection of a good school or non-exempt outstanding school. We do not give graded judgements on a section 8 inspection. However, if we find some evidence that the school could now be better than good or that standards may be declining, then the next inspection will be a section 5 inspection. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the section 8 inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will convert the section 8 inspection to a section 5 inspection immediately.

This is the second section 8 inspection since we judged the school to be good in March 2012.

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 are the school and you are 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	118740
Local authority	Kent
Inspection number	10122251
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	131
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	John Collins
Headteacher	Claire Frost
Website	www.wittersham.kent.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	22 June 2016

Information about this school

- The school is smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- As a school with a distinctive Christian ethos, it was last subject to an inspection under section 48 of the Education Act 2005 in June 2017, when it was judged to be outstanding.

Information about this inspection

- We held meetings with the headteacher, the assistant headteacher, the special educational needs coordinator and subject leaders.
- The lead inspector met two governors, including the chair of the governing body.
- We evaluated the effectiveness of safeguarding. The lead inspector met with the designated safeguarding lead to check the procedures in place to keep children safe. The lead inspector reviewed safeguarding records, including the central record of recruitment checks on staff. We spoke to pupils about how the school keeps them safe.
- To help us understand the quality of education, we looked in detail at some subjects. We did deep dives into reading, history and science. We spoke with leaders for these

subjects, visited lessons, talked with groups of pupils, looked at pupils' work and spoke with teachers.

- We spoke to pupils, staff and parents to gather their views about the school. Survey responses from 40 pupils, 25 members of staff and 36 parents were considered. We also spoke with parents before and after school.

Inspection team

Theresa Phillips, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Deborah Gordon

Ofsted Inspector

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