

# Inspection of a good school: Ashford, St Mary's Church of England Primary School

Western Avenue, Ashford, Kent TN23 1ND

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Inspection dates:

28–29 January 2020

## Outcome

Ashford, St Mary's Church of England Primary School continues to be a good school.

## What is it like to attend this school?

Staff know pupils well. High levels of care and support allow pupils to thrive, including those who have had difficult experiences elsewhere. Pupils know there is always an adult they can go to for help when they need to. Pupils feel safe. They say that there is little bullying or unkindness at the school. They know that, if they do have any problems, staff will sort these out promptly.

Teachers have high expectations for pupils' behaviour and learning. Pupils respond to these well. Pupils, including the youngest children, quickly learn how they should behave towards others. The school's distinctive vision, 'To enjoy life in all its fullness and shine as lights in the world...', shines through. Classrooms are calm and purposeful places. In lessons, pupils enjoy asking questions and sharing their ideas. Teachers help pupils to keep going if they find work hard or make a mistake. One pupil said, 'I am proud of this hard work, and [of] the fact that I understand it!'

Leaders and staff want every child to achieve their very best. One parent wrote, 'I feel the school cares about my children, both academically and as young people with values and aspirations.'

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

Pupils learn about all of the subjects in the national curriculum. Leaders have thought carefully about what they want pupils to learn in each subject and the order in which this knowledge is taught. However, in some subjects, teaching does not reliably ensure that pupils remember the knowledge and skills they have been taught from one year to the next. Consequently, pupils do not always build on their previous learning as effectively as they could.

Leaders have high expectations for all pupils. Pupils' behaviour in and around the school is calm and sensible. Leaders are working to make pupils' achievement even stronger in a range of subjects, especially reading, writing and mathematics. Pupils with special

educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) learn as well as their peers. Staff make sure that these pupils are fully included and enjoy all aspects of school life. The school's welcoming culture reflects this. As soon as children join the early years, leaders work closely with families to understand and meet their children's needs.

In the early years, adults plan learning that enables children to develop the knowledge they need for Year 1. Adults model to children how to speak and work with others well. Children play and learn well together. There are many opportunities for children to develop skills in early reading, writing and mathematics. In the number sessions, teachers skilfully set out tasks that engage children and are linked, for example, to traditional stories and children's physical development.

Leaders give great importance to teaching the skills of reading. Staff know a lot about how pupils learn to read. They teach phonics well. Pupils read books that are well matched to the sounds that they have learned. Staff quickly identify pupils who need extra help, and they support them to catch up with their reading should they start to fall behind.

Teachers encourage pupils to read often, and to read at home and at school. The majority of pupils enjoy reading. Teachers also encourage pupils to read books that appeal to their interests. This motivates pupils to read regularly and further develops their reading ability. However, some older pupils do not develop a deeper understanding of what they read. Teachers are helping pupils learn ways to do this. They are introducing pupils to a wider range of vocabulary. There are early signs that this is making a positive difference.

Teachers have strong subject knowledge in mathematics. They explain mathematical concepts well and quickly pick up on pupils' misunderstandings. Pupils like the way teachers recap important knowledge. For example, opportunities to practise previous learning on fractions helped older pupils to confidently tackle work on decimals. Pupils' achievement in mathematics is improving.

After-school clubs allow pupils to follow their interests. Pupils like the responsibilities they have, which range from class 'monitors' to members of the school council. They told me that they have helped to plan special events and fundraising activities.

Staff well-being is a priority for leaders. They encourage teachers to develop subject plans with colleagues from other schools. Teachers told me how this has helped to reduce their workload. Teachers also value highly the support they receive to strengthen their teaching expertise.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders and governors make sure that safeguarding is their number one priority. Adults understand how to report concerns. When appropriate, referrals are made to external agencies and followed up promptly and tenaciously. Regular training means that staff are

alert to signs that a pupil's welfare may be at risk. All necessary checks are made on adults working at the school.

Pupils told me that they feel safe and learn how to keep safe. For example, pupils keep safe in science lessons, for example wearing lab coats and eye protection. They learn to keep safe in the wider world, including keeping safe online.

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

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

- Curriculum leaders have developed a carefully sequenced framework for introducing knowledge, skills and vocabulary to pupils in all subjects. Leaders have begun to check the impact of this new framework on teaching and on pupils' learning. Leaders work in this area needs to continue and develop further, to ensure that all pupils make coherent and successful progress, in all subjects, as they move through the school.
- Teachers are well trained to teach phonics and early reading. Pupils develop the skills they need to decode text and begin to read with confidence. However, older pupils' ability to infer meaning from text is less well developed. This is a barrier to raising pupils' achievement further. Leaders should ensure that the sharp focus on early reading continues throughout the school, to enable all pupils to develop fluency and comprehension appropriate to their age.

## **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 first section 8 inspection since we judged Ashford, St Mary's Church of England Primary School to be good on 23–24 June 2016.

## **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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	118738
<b>Local authority</b>	Kent
<b>Inspection number</b>	10122257
<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary aided
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4 to 11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	419
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	Local authority
<b>Chair of governing body</b>	Asif Hussain
<b>Headteacher</b>	Leonard Williams
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.st-marys-ashford.kent.sch.uk">www.st-marys-ashford.kent.sch.uk</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	23–24 June 2016

## Information about this school

- Ashford St Mary’s Church of England Primary School is larger than the average-sized primary school.
- Since the previous inspection, the school leadership has changed significantly. The current headteacher was appointed in January 2019.
- An average proportion of pupils are eligible for pupil premium funding.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is below the national average.
- The school runs a breakfast club managed by the school. There is an after-school care provision managed and inspected separately.

## Information about this inspection

- I met with the headteacher, senior leaders and staff. I spoke on the telephone with a representative of the local authority and I met with the chair of governors.
- As part of the inspection, I considered the following subjects: reading, science and mathematics. In each subject, I visited lessons in all key stages, scrutinised pupils’ work (this included listening to pupils read), and held discussions with subject leaders,

teachers and pupils. I also reviewed curriculum plans in a range of other subjects and made short visits to lessons to see pupils learning a range of subjects.

- I spoke to pupils, parents and staff about the school's work to keep pupils safe. I also considered safeguarding records and documentation, along with the school's single central record of staff suitability checks.
- I gathered pupils' views on the school by speaking to groups of pupils from the lessons that I had visited, speaking to pupils in their lessons and speaking to pupils at informal times, such as lunchtime. There were 57 responses to Ofsted's online pupils' questionnaire.
- I reviewed the 57 responses and free-text comments submitted by parents to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View. I also spoke to parents before school on the second day of the inspection.
- There were 33 responses to Ofsted's online survey for staff. I also gathered staff views when meeting with teachers following lesson visits and when scrutinising pupils' work.

## **Inspection team**

Jo Lakey, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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