

Inspection of a good school: St Bartholomew's CofE VC Primary School

Princess Way, Stourport-on-Severn, Worcestershire DY13 0EL

Inspection dates:

11–12 February 2020

Outcome

St Bartholomew's CofE VC Primary School continues to be a good school.

However, inspectors have some concerns that standards may be declining, as set out below.

What is it like to attend this school?

Leaders make sure that school is a safe and happy place to learn. Pupils are friendly and well cared for by staff.

Pupils behave well and disruption in lessons is rare. Leaders have been successful in reducing the number of exclusions and behaviour incidents. Pupils know that bullying is 'several times on purpose (STOP)'. They are confident to report any issues to adults and that action is taken.

A new approach to learning has been introduced. Learning is based on key principles, such as 'diversity' and 'oneness'. Pupils are encouraged to ask questions and find things out. Lessons are often practical. Staff and pupils enjoy the enrichment activities offered every Wednesday afternoon. These include performing, creative arts and forest school.

Staff want pupils to do well but their expectations of what pupils can achieve are sometimes not high enough, especially in early years and key stage 1. Consequently, some pupils do not achieve as well as they should.

Parents have positive views of the school. As one parent put it, 'I have nothing but praise for the school.' Parents particularly value the support their children receive if they have a learning or communication difficulty.

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

Children get off to a good start in the recently opened class for two-year-olds. They are well cared for by staff and encouraged to develop good speaking and listening skills from the outset. Children settle quickly and happily pretend to make cups of tea, cook and listen to stories. Toilet training is also managed well. Children continue to make good gains in the Nursery. Stories, rhymes and games are used successfully to develop early

language skills. Children develop good levels of independence, for example putting on their coats and eating at the snack table.

Leaders have recently redesigned the curriculum. They call this their 'harmony' curriculum. Questions are posed such as 'What's wrong with our water?' Pupils then investigate and link different subject knowledge and skills together over a number of weeks to reach a conclusion. Science is covered well using this approach. However, there is limited coverage of other subjects, such as art, music or modern foreign languages. These are not taught very often or included in current planning. This means that pupils do not gain the skills and knowledge they should in all subjects.

Sometimes there are differences in what teachers plan and work that pupils complete. Leaders are aware that the new curriculum is in its very early stages. They know that more checks are needed by subject leaders to make sure the curriculum is being planned and delivered as intended.

Reading is a whole-school priority and leaders have introduced rewards and initiatives to encourage pupils to read regularly. In key stage 2 each day starts with 'reading for pleasure'. However, some pupils lack fluency and confidence in their reading as these skills are not developed well enough in key stage 1. While additional adult support is provided for pupils who are struggling, this is not as regular as it could be. Phonics is taught daily in the early years and Year 1. However, some home reading books do not match the sounds that pupils know. This limits their progress.

Staff expectations of pupils' writing are too low. Teachers accept work which is untidy. They do not pick up errors in pupils' writing early enough. As a result, standards in writing remain low in key stage 1.

Relationships between pupils and staff are positive. Pupils talk about 'five trusted adults', counting on their fingers who they can go to if they have a problem. Pupils are also aware of the 'cherry orchard room' where they can go at lunchtime if they are sad or anxious.

Leaders ensure that pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are identified early and specialist professionals provide support where needed. Teachers make sure that these pupils are given the help they need to be able to achieve well.

Work on promoting pupils' personal, physical, social and emotional development is a strength of the school. One afternoon a week is dedicated to enhancing pupils' physical and mental well-being. Values such as compassion, respect and resilience are taught. These contribute strongly to pupils' personal development.

Pupils readily take on additional responsibilities and carry out these roles sensibly. Pupils enjoy the trips, clubs and events organised which expand their cultural development.

There are too many pupils who are persistently absent. This has a negative impact on their education. Leaders are determined to work with parents to improve attendance.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders ensure that safeguarding is a collective responsibility. Staff receive regular training to check their understanding of safeguarding systems and policies. Adults know what steps to take if they have any concerns about a pupils' well-being.

Leaders contact other agencies to seek additional help for families who need it. On occasion, leaders trust social care too readily. They do not follow up concerns they raise about the most vulnerable pupils, whose attendance is very low, robustly enough. This means that leaders do not know what action, if any, has been taken by social care. Consequently, these pupils remain persistently absent and miss too much school.

The records for checking the suitability of staff are well maintained. Parents, staff and pupils agree that the school keeps pupils safe.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In the foundation subjects leaders' plans for the curriculum are in the early stages of development. Not enough pupils have an age-appropriate understanding of a range of subjects across the curriculum and they have gaps in their skills and knowledge. Leaders should ensure that all subjects are taught and that intended curriculum plans are fully implemented and monitored for impact.
- Some subject leaders are new to their roles and have had limited time to monitor the effectiveness of the new curriculum. Leaders should ensure that all those who lead a curriculum area have the skills and training required to identify where development is needed and provide the support needed to ensure that pupils achieve as well as they should in all areas.
- There are weaknesses in the teaching of reading. This means that too few pupils read as well as they should for their age. The lowest-ability pupils do not read daily to an adult and their home reading books are not checked and changed regularly to aid progression. Early reading books are not well matched to the phonic sounds that pupils know. Older pupils are not encouraged to read aloud frequently to develop their fluency and confidence. Leaders should address these weaknesses in the teaching of reading to improve pupils' outcomes and ensure that the least able catch up quickly.
- Children in the early years and key stage 1 are not prepared well enough for the next stage of their education in writing. Standards at the end of Year 2 are significantly below the national average. Leaders should ensure that teachers pay close attention to basic skills, such as finger spacing, letter formation, spelling and punctuation, so that weaknesses in writing are picked up and addressed quickly.
- Too many pupils are persistently absent, and numbers are rising. This means that too many pupils are missing parts of their education. Leaders should take further steps to work with parents to instil the importance of regular school attendance. Leaders should

also be more robust in following up referrals made to social care when the most vulnerable pupils are not in 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 first section 8 inspection since we judged the predecessor school, St Bartholomew's CofE VC Primary School, to be good on 7–8 November 2013.

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 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	143833
Local authority	Worcestershire
Inspection number	10122526
Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	268
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Robert Keal
Headteacher	Ian James
Website	www.st-bartholomews.worcs.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- This school joined the Severn Academies Educational Trust in March 2017. When its predecessor school, St Bartholomew's CofE VC Primary School, was last inspected by Ofsted in November 2013, it was judged to be good overall.
- The headteacher was appointed in September 2019.
- The school opened provision for two-year-olds in September 2018.
- The school was inspected as a voluntary controlled school under section 48 of the 2006 Education Act in December 2016. The school was graded as outstanding.

Information about this inspection

- We met with the headteacher, phase leaders, curriculum leaders, teachers and pupils.
- The lead inspector met with the chief executive officer, a member of the board of directors and the director responsible for primary schools in the trust. She also met with four members of the local governing body.
- The subjects considered as part of this inspection were reading, mathematics and science. These deep dives entailed meeting with subject leaders and teachers, looking at curriculum plans, visiting lessons, speaking to pupils about their learning and

scrutinising pupils' work. Inspectors also considered other curriculum subjects, including writing.

- The lead inspector listened to pupils read in class and observed a member of staff hearing pupils read.
- The arrangements for safeguarding were checked. This included checks on the single central record, staff training and safeguarding records.
- We discussed behaviour with leaders and checked records. Records of attendance were also checked. We also observed pupils' behaviour in lessons, at breaktimes and as they moved around the school.
- We analysed the school's plans for improvement and looked at curriculum planning. Checks of the school's website were made together with publicly available pupil performance information.
- We talked with pupils in lessons and during meetings about their work.
- We took account of the 32 responses to Ofsted's survey, Parent View. The school's own parent survey was also considered.
- We met with a number of staff and considered the 18 responses to Ofsted's online staff survey.

Inspection team

Heather Simpson, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Lindsay Nash

Ofsted Inspector

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