

Inspection of a good school: Great Gaddesden Church of England Primary School

Church Meadow, Great Gaddesden, Great Gaddesden Primary School, Hemel Hempstead, Hertfordshire HP1 3BT

Inspection date: 14 July 2021

Outcome

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

What is it like to attend this school?

Great Gaddesden is a small rural school. Each of the four classes has pupils from two year groups. Class sizes are small. Everyone knows everyone and the school has a strong family feel.

The school's mission statement is to 'treat others exactly as you would like to be treated yourself'. Pupils are encouraged to think about other people, and to be caring and kind. They raise money for charities and learn about the reasons why charity is needed. For example, pupils raised money so that they could 'adopt' a koala, in response to the Australian bushfires.

Pupils enjoy coming to school. They like spending time with their friends and learning new things. Leaders and staff have high expectations of pupils. They expect pupils to try hard and to do their best. Pupils respond well to these expectations. They behave well and show good attitudes to learning.

Every parent who responded to Parent View, Ofsted's online survey, said that their child feels safe at school. Bullying does not happen very often, and it is dealt with promptly by staff when it does occur.

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

Leaders have done a great deal to improve the curriculum. They have thought carefully about what the curriculum should include and how it should be delivered. For each subject, the curriculum starts with the early years and builds steadily through to the end of Year 6. In mathematics, for example, the school has adopted a published scheme of work. This provides a well-sequenced approach to teaching the subject.

Leaders have identified the skills and knowledge pupils are expected to learn. This has helped to ensure that pupils learn about each subject, step by step, as they move through the school. There is more to do to identify the specific content pupils are expected to know and remember in each subject. For example, in history, leaders have identified key knowledge that pupils should know, such as the meaning of 'BC' and 'AD', or 'BCE' and 'CE', for example. However, they have not identified the key content that is most important for pupils to remember, such as about the Vikings or Anglo-Saxons.

Pupils progress through the curriculum well. Classrooms are calm and orderly places where it is easy to concentrate. Pupils remember what they have been taught. Staff know individual pupils well. They know the particular needs of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). They adapt how the curriculum is delivered in order to meet those needs. All parents of pupils with SEND who responded to Parent View said that the school gives their children the support they need to succeed.

Reading has a high profile. Staff have identified the key texts that they want pupils to read, or hear read to them, in each school year. The books chosen are a careful mixture of 'old favourites', texts by modern authors and stories chosen to challenge pupils' thinking. Leaders and staff encourage pupils to develop a love of reading. The school has a well-stocked library, as well as other attractive reading areas, that encourage pupils to sit and enjoy a book.

Children get off to a good start with learning to read. They have daily phonics sessions and quickly learn to recognise letters and sounds. Leaders are in the process of deciding which phonics scheme the school will use in future, in response to the changes made recently by the Department for Education.

Children practise blending sounds together and usually use this as their way of reading unfamiliar words. However, some of the school's reading books are not well matched to the phonics pupils have been taught. When this is the case, pupils are unable to work out unknown words because they do not know the sounds that the letters stand for. This encourages them to use the pictures to guess what the word might be.

Pupils enjoy a range of wider opportunities beyond the academic curriculum. For example, they visit places like the nearby Buddhist temple and Windsor Castle. These visits have been 'on hold' because of COVID-19 (coronavirus) pandemic restrictions. However, pupils have enjoyed taking part in other special activities during this time, such as 'the great Great Gaddesden bake off' and remote World Book Day celebrations. Leaders are determined to reinstate all aspects of the wider curriculum as quickly as possible. For example, following partial lifting of restrictions, the oldest pupils recently went on a residential visit to an outward-bound centre.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

The school has a strong safeguarding culture. Leaders and staff are vigilant and alert to possible signs of abuse or neglect. Staff report concerns promptly using an online

reporting system. Records show that these concerns are taken seriously, and swift action is taken, where necessary, in response to them.

Leaders have taken a range of actions to ensure that pupils feel listened to. For example, pupils in key stage 2 value the school's 'don't bottle it up' system. This electronic system gives pupils an alternative way to tell their teacher quickly and privately if they are worried about something. Classes also have 'worry boxes' that staff respond to promptly.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The school currently uses 'Letters and Sounds' as its approach for teaching phonics. The Department for Education recently issued guidance advising that schools should use a complete systematic synthetic phonics (SSP) programme. It has further advised that 'Letters and Sounds' is not considered to be a complete SSP programme. In addition, with some exceptions, the school's reading books are not well matched to its SSP programme. This means that pupils are given books to read that include words that they do not have the phonics knowledge to decode. Leaders should take action to decide which complete SSP programme the school will use going forward, and ensure that the books that early readers are given to read are well matched to their phonics knowledge.
- The school's curriculum identifies the skills and knowledge pupils are expected to learn, in all subjects. For example, in science, leaders have specified the investigative knowledge and skills pupils need, progressively, as they move through the school. However, leaders have not identified the key content knowledge needed for all subjects. This risks pupils not being taught the most important aspects of subjects or subjects not being given sufficient weight. Leaders should take action to ensure that the most important content knowledge is identified for all subjects so that it is completely clear what pupils are expected to know and remember for the topics they learn about.

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 or outstanding school, because it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on a section 8 inspection. However, if we find some evidence that a good 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 school to be good on 8 and 9 March 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

Unique reference number	117433
Local authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	10193976
Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	83
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Carole Connelly
Headteacher	Sarah Wickens
Website	www.greatgaddesden.herts.sch.uk
Dates of previous inspection	8 and 9 March 2016, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The headteacher joined the school in January 2018. The senior teacher joined the school in April 2020.
- Great Gaddesden is a Church of England school. It is part of the Diocese of St Albans.

Information about this inspection

- We met with the headteacher and other leaders, representatives of the governing body, groups of pupils, and a representative of the local authority.
- We did deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics and science. We met with subject leaders, visited lessons, looked at pupils' work, spoke with pupils and staff, and listened to pupils reading.
- To check the effectiveness of safeguarding, we met with the school's designated safeguarding lead, checked the school's single central record, looked at safeguarding records, and spoke with pupils and staff.

Inspection team

Wendy Varney, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Isabel Davis

Her Majesty's Inspector

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