

Inspection of a good school: Church of the Ascension CofE Primary School

New Street, Wall Heath, Kingswinford, West Midlands DY6 9AH

Inspection dates:

3 and 4 November 2021

Outcome

Church of the Ascension CofE Primary School continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

At this school, pupils are polite, courteous and respectful of others. The school's values of thankfulness, generosity, forgiveness, honesty, perseverance and respect are integral to all learning. Pupils understand these values and are encouraged to live by them. Positive relationships between adults and pupils mean that pupils learn in a calm and purposeful environment. Staff support pupils who need extra help to manage their behaviour extremely well. This minimises disruption to learning.

There is an enthusiasm for learning that runs throughout the school. For example, many pupils spoke excitedly about their forthcoming residential visit to London and the many clubs that are on offer, including Taekwondo, football and the school's musical band. Pupils' confidence and social skills are developed well as a result. Pupils are proud to represent their school in sporting competitions and have enjoyed visits to 'Think Tank' and Cadbury's World.

Staff have high expectations and, as a result, pupils achieve well. Recent improvements to the curriculum are enabling pupils to do this. Pupils take on additional responsibilities around school, including a 'buddy' system where older pupils look after younger pupils. Pupils understand it is important to be kind. Therefore, bullying is rare. However, any issues are swiftly dealt with.

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

Staff teach phonics and early reading well. In early years and key stage 1, a structured and systematic approach enables pupils to master letter sounds and make sense of words. Staff are consistent in their delivery. Most pupils can read well, at an age-appropriate level, when they move into key stage 2. For those who need it, phonics teaching continues into Year 3 and beyond. The COVID-19 catch-up funding is used effectively to target pupils who have fallen behind with their reading because of the pandemic.

The mathematics curriculum is carefully considered. Leaders have provided a clear sequence of learning from Reception to Year 6 for staff to follow. Younger children get a good foundation in counting, number recognition and patterns. For example, children counted conkers accurately after a visit to the local park. This groundwork ensures pupils are well prepared to learn more complex concepts in key stage 1. Staff balance fluency in mathematics with problem-solving and reasoning well. The curriculum is ambitious and all pupils, including pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), are supported to achieve well. Teaching assistants' support is well deployed and effective.

Elsewhere in the school's curriculum, leaders have ensured there is breadth and balance in what pupils learn. Effective plans are in place for all subjects. Many curriculum leaders are new in post. They are well trained and knowledgeable, but some leaders have not introduced fully changes to assessment in their subject or monitored the implementation of the curriculum. However, in many subjects, including geography, there is clear evidence that pupils are producing work of high quality. Pupils talk confidently, using subject-specific vocabulary, about the key knowledge they have remembered and the new skills they have acquired.

Identification of pupils' needs begins in the early years. Staff keep a watchful eye as children learn to communicate and socialise. Where needed, pupils have access to speech and language therapy. Staff ensure that pupils with SEND get regular support and have access to all the school does. Leaders have identified that checks on pupils' learning to see which interventions are working well are not as effective as they could be.

Most pupils have an excellent understanding of how to keep themselves healthy. One pupil said, 'If you don't look after your mind and body properly, you become unwell.' Annually, pupils take part in a 'good health' week and this further embeds the messages they learn throughout the year.

Staff responded very positively to Ofsted's staff survey. Those spoken to describe leaders as considerate of their workload. They are made to feel valued and appreciated. All staff are proud to work at the school and share the vision of becoming the best school they can be. Parents and carers are also of the view that there is a supportive ethos at the school. Parents say any problems are quickly sorted out by senior leaders who are always available and approachable.

Those responsible for governance are informed, evaluative and actively involved in monitoring the school. They have a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities. They work closely with leaders to provide the support and challenge to improve the school's curriculum further.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders and governors ensure the appropriate checks are carried out on school staff. Staff are vigilant about the potential risks that pupils may face. Staff receive up-to-date safeguarding training. They know what actions to take if they have any concerns about a

pupil's safety. Leaders work with external agencies to make sure pupils get the help they need. Pupils know how to keep themselves safe. They can talk about healthy relationships, internet safety and have had visits from the police and the Royal National Lifeboat Institution so they are aware of dangers in the locality. These visits help pupils to manage risk.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Several subject leaders are new to post and are still developing some aspects of their subjects. This includes refining curriculum planning and the use of assessment. Subject leaders need dedicated time and support to complete this work. In particular, leaders should ensure that assessment approaches are not overly onerous on staff. This will enable leaders to have a clear and accurate picture of pupils' learning in all subjects and enable pupils to make even more progress.

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 evidence that a school would now receive a higher or lower grade, 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 deem the section 8 inspection as a section 5 inspection immediately.

This is the second section 8 inspection since we judged the school to be good in May 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 information from Ofsted Parent View 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	103835
Local authority	Dudley
Inspection number	10200280
Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	306
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Tom Davies
Headteacher	Stephen Hudson
Website	www.chur-ascen.dudley.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	1 November 2016, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school has recently been given permission to convert to an academy. There are plans in place for it to join a trust in January 2022.
- Many middle leaders and subject leaders are new to post. The key stage 1 and key stage 2 coordinators are new to their roles, as is the school's special educational needs coordinator (SENCo).
- The school does not use any alternative providers.
- The school is a voluntary controlled Church of England school. The last section 48 inspection was carried out in June 2017. The next inspection is due in 2022.

Information about this inspection

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. The inspector discussed the impact of the pandemic with school leaders and have taken that into account in her evaluation.
- The inspector met with the headteacher, the SENCo, the English, mathematics and geography leaders and class teachers. The inspector also met with five governors.

- Deep dives were carried out in English, mathematics and geography. For each deep dive, the inspector looked at curriculum planning and spoke to leaders about their subjects. The inspector conducted joint lesson visits with the headteacher, spoke to pupils about their work and wider school experiences and looked at a range of pupils' work.
- The inspector scrutinised a wide range of safeguarding information, including the school's safeguarding policy, spoke to staff and pupils about safeguarding and looked at how pupils learn to keep themselves safe. The inspector spoke to the safeguarding lead about the recording and reporting of any safeguarding incidents.
- The inspector also checked the school's website.

Inspection team

Heather Phillips, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

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