

Inspection of a good school: Brightwell-Cum-Sotwell Church of England Primary School

Greenmere, Brightwell-Cum-Sotwell, Wallingford, Oxfordshire OX10 0QH

Inspection date:

1 March 2022

Outcome

Brightwell-Cum-Sotwell Church of England Primary School continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Staff are ambitious for all pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Pupils are inspired to work hard. They enjoy learning and thrive on being challenged.

Pupils flourish at this happy school. Their attitudes demonstrate the school values of respect, resilience and reflection. Pupils learn it is okay to get things wrong. As one pupil commented, 'We learn from making mistakes.'

All staff have high expectations of pupils' behaviour. Adults model to pupils how to behave. This helps pupils to understand what is expected. As a result, their behaviour is consistently positive. Pupils of all ages play well together, supported by Year 6 active leaders. Older pupils are notably caring towards the youngest children. They say the school is a 'bully-free zone'. Pupils are confident that adults will help to sort out occasionally unkind behaviour. This helps pupils to feel safe in school.

Pupils relish the range of opportunities in this small school. They enjoy the variety of clubs, including rock and pop music lessons. They like the responsibility of pupil leadership positions such as school councillors. Pupils learn to manage risk safely during forest school sessions when learning to use tools such as hammers and saws.

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

Prior to academisation, turbulence in leadership and staffing slowed work to improve the school. Leaders have more recently established a culture of high ambition. As one pupil commented, 'We are encouraged to be the best that we can be.'

Staff help pupils to develop a love of reading. They routinely read aloud to pupils, including books that promote diversity and well-being. This exposes pupils to texts they would not otherwise be able to read themselves.

The teaching of reading is effective. Children learn phonics from the very start of Reception. Teachers with the most expert knowledge teach the youngest pupils in small groups. Staff follow the phonics programme closely. Struggling readers are given strong support to help them to keep up. Consequently, pupils learn to read well.

Leaders have provided training for staff in mathematics. This helps staff to follow the curriculum, which is structured to build pupils' learning methodically. Staff accurately check pupils' understanding and provide timely feedback. This ensures that they understand how to improve their work. Pupils use different resources to support their learning including classroom displays. They enjoy being challenged in mathematics. As one pupil commented, 'My teacher gives me tricky work to do.'

Leaders have ensured a well-sequenced curriculum in other subjects is in place which starts from Reception. Curriculum thinking identifies the broad knowledge and skills that leaders want pupils to learn. This helps pupils to link new learning to what they have learned before. For example, in Year 1, pupils learn about hot and cold places in the world. In Year 3, pupils build on this knowledge by using maps to find different locations. In some of these subjects, leaders have not precisely identified what they want pupils to learn. Consequently, teachers routinely check on pupils' understanding during lessons, but they do not always check that the most important knowledge has been learned.

The COVID-19 pandemic has slowed leaders' work to develop subject leadership. Some subject leaders are new to their roles. They have not yet had the opportunity to visit lessons, review books and talk to pupils. This means they do not know how well pupils are learning. Leaders have already identified this is an area to be strengthened.

This is an inclusive school. Leaders ensure that staff are trained to support pupils well. Staff adapt their teaching so that almost all pupils can access the same curriculum as other pupils. This includes effective help from additional adults. Some pupils learn an individual curriculum that meets their needs well. Parents are right to be positive about the support for pupils with SEND.

Pupils learn to value differences between people. This includes different families, beliefs and abilities. As a result, pupils are respectful. Staff teach pupils the importance of treating other people as they wish to be treated. Consequently, pupils are considerate and polite. This results in a calm and welcoming environment.

Pupils have consistently positive attitudes to learning and are proud of their school. They behave well in lessons and concentrate on their work. Poor behaviour rarely disrupts lessons.

Governors and trustees know their school well. They offer effective challenge and support to leaders. Staff say that leaders are considerate of their workload. They feel valued and are proud to work at the school.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders and staff have a strong knowledge of the pupils, families and the local community. This helps them to notice if a child may be at risk of harm. Staff have received training so they know what signs to be alert to if a child may be at risk. Staff report concerns promptly. Records are comprehensive. Leaders work with external agencies well to help safeguard pupils. They are tenacious in making sure that pupils get the help they need.

Governors and leaders work together to ensure that safer recruitment procedures are followed to ensure appropriate adults work with children.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Curriculum thinking in some subjects is not specific enough. This means that staff do not check that pupils have learned and remembered the most important content. Leaders should ensure that in all subjects they have identified from Reception onwards the most important knowledge and skills for pupils to learn and remember. Leaders have already taken action to remedy this. For this reason, the transitional arrangements have been applied.
- Subject leadership is underdeveloped. Leaders should ensure that they are equipped with the skills needed to refine curriculum thinking and check how well pupils are learning the key knowledge and skills.

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 first section 8 inspection since we judged the predecessor school, Brightwell-cum-Sotwell Church of England Primary School, to be good in February 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 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	144568
Local authority	Oxfordshire
Inspection number	10203143
Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	5 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	132
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Ian Domville
Headteacher	Fin Lewis
Website	www.brightwell.oxon.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- Brightwell-cum-Sotwell Church of England Primary School converted to become an academy school in September 2017. When its predecessor school, Brightwell-cum-Sotwell Church of England Primary School, was last inspected by Ofsted, it was judged to be good overall.
- The school has had eight interim headteachers since the predecessor school's last inspection in 2013.
- The school joined the Merchant Taylors' Oxfordshire Academy Trust LTD in September 2017. Almost all staff have joined the school after this date.
- This school is a voluntary controlled Church of England school in the Diocese of Oxford. Its last section 48 inspection took place in March 2020.
- The school does not currently use any alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.

- The inspectors met with the interim headteacher, the assistant headteacher and other school staff.
- The lead inspector also met with members of the local governing body, including the chair, and spoke to a group of trustees, including the chair of trustees.
- The inspectors carried out deep dives into these subjects: early reading, mathematics and geography. For each deep dive, inspectors met with subject leaders, looked at curriculum planning, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- The inspectors also looked at curriculum planning and spoke to leaders about some other subjects.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, inspectors spoke with staff and pupils. The lead inspector met with the designated safeguarding leads to review their knowledge, records and actions and also reviewed information about the safer recruitment of staff.
- Inspectors spoke to staff and groups of pupils from different year groups and observed behaviour in classrooms and at playtime.
- The views of staff and pupils, including responses to Ofsted's online staff and pupil surveys, were considered.
- The responses to Ofsted Parent View, including written responses, were also taken into account.

Inspection team

Laurie Anderson, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Kimberley Kemp

Ofsted Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
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