

Inspection of a good school: Benenden Church of England Primary School

Rolvenden Road, Cranbrook TN17 4EH

Inspection dates:

23 and 24 February 2022

Outcome

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

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are enthusiastic about their school. They are happy to attend and particularly appreciate the way staff look after them. Staff are caring and they know pupils well.

Teachers have high expectations of pupils. From early years, children learn how to follow the school's rules and how to treat each other with respect. Bullying rarely happens and is dealt with quickly by staff if it does. Unkindness is dealt with well by adults. Pupils who are worried about something routinely go to adults for help or advice. Those pupils who need a quiet place to go to if they are upset visit the 'hedgehog room' where they can get help from adults.

Pupils regularly attend the school's after-school clubs. These include street dance, French, chess, computer coding and tag rugby. Leaders use outside agencies and specialist sports coaches to provide clubs in judo and tennis. Pupils value the specialist tuition that these coaches provide.

There are many opportunities for pupils to develop their independence and to assume positions of responsibility. Several lunchtime clubs are operated by Year 6 pupils, such as netball and football. Pupils have the opportunity to apply to become 'eco warriors' so that they can contribute to the ways that the school is environmentally responsible. Pupils feel like they have a say in the decisions made in school. Several were chosen to help leaders plan a new 'reflection garden' in the school's grounds.

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

The COVID-19 pandemic has presented leaders and governors with significant challenges. Despite this, leaders have overseen a move into the new school building and the development of a new curriculum. Leaders have now established an ambitious and well-designed curriculum.

Leaders have identified what pupils need to know and when they need to learn it. In subjects such as mathematics, teachers ensure that pupils build on their learning so that they can understand more complex knowledge as they move into the later year groups.

Leaders prioritise reading. Staff teach phonics well. They make sure that the books that younger pupils read closely match the sounds pupils know. Teachers adhere closely to the school's agreed methods for teaching phonics. Pupils learn to read with increasing fluency from early years and into Years 1 and 2. By the time pupils are older, they have developed an appreciation of different types of books and are keen to read widely. Pupils who need extra help to read receive tailored support from well-trained adults.

Teachers have strong subject knowledge. They use a rich variety of carefully planned resources to enthuse pupils. In early years, skilled adults make sure that children are very well prepared to start Year 1. For example, in mathematics, children learn about the numbers between 1 and ten before practising putting different numbers together to form ten using number grids and counters. Children in Reception develop their mathematical fluency very well.

Assessment is not as strong as it could be in all subjects. In a small proportion of subjects, such as religious education, teachers do not check on what pupils know and understand effectively enough. Consequently, teachers do not fully adapt their teaching so that pupils can build on their prior knowledge.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities are supported well by staff. Leaders ensure that pupils' needs are identified quickly and bespoke plans are put in place for pupils that require them. Pupils with education, health and care plans receive thoughtfully chosen external support.

Pupils' wider development is a strength. They develop an awareness of how to be active citizens as they move through the year groups. Leaders actively promote fundamental British values within assemblies, discussions in classes and other opportunities. For example, pupils learn about democracy from an early age. They are keen to join the school council so that they can make decisions regarding the school. Leaders organise for outside speakers to become involved in the curriculum. For example, a group of female engineers spoke to Year 6 pupils about the career opportunities available to them in science and technology industries.

Staff are proud to work at Benenden. They feel that leaders support them well. Staff appreciate the training opportunities that leaders organise for them. Several staff commented on the benefits of working with colleagues from the other primary school in the federation.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Staff take safeguarding very seriously. They are well trained. Staff know how to spot signs that children may be at risk of harm. Leaders ensure that concerns about pupils are recorded in detail and that appropriate actions are taken.

Leaders work well with external agencies and allocate school resources to provide external support for pupils, such as counselling, when it is required. Governors understand their safeguarding responsibilities and monitor leaders' arrangements closely.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Assessment is not consistently effective across all subjects. In some subjects, teachers do not fully understand how pupils' learning is developing. This means that pupils do not achieve as well as they could in all subjects. Leaders should ensure that teachers use assessment well across the curriculum.

Background

When we have judged 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 school to be good on 13 and 14 December 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 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	118597
Local authority	Kent
Inspection number	10207095
Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	5 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	204
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Oliver Miller
Headteacher	Lindsay Roberts
Website	www.benenden-cep.kent.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	13 and 14 December 2016, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The executive headteacher joined the school in April 2019.
- The school joined the 10:10 Primary Federation in April 2020. The other school in the federation is Goudhurst and Kilndown Church of England Primary School.
- The school is a member of the Diocese of Canterbury and has a Christian character.
- A Section 48 inspection was carried out in November 2017.

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 the school, and has taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- The inspector held meetings with the executive headteacher, the head of school, the special educational needs coordinator, subject leaders, governors, a representative from the diocese and a representative from the local authority.

- The inspector did deep dives in these subjects: reading, mathematics and religious education. In each subject, the inspector met with subject leaders, talked to pupils, visited lessons, spoke to teachers and looked at pupils' work.
- The inspector reviewed safeguarding records, including the central record of recruitment checks on staff.
- The inspector took into account 68 responses to Ofsted Parent View, including 62 free-text comments.
- The inspector also considered the views of staff from meetings with groups of staff and from the 22 staff who responded to the confidential questionnaire.
- The inspector scrutinised documentation, including the school's plans for improvement, its self-evaluation, reports on behaviour, records relating to pupils' safety, and minutes of governors' meetings.
- The inspector considered the views of 39 pupils who responded to Ofsted's confidential pupil questionnaire.

Inspection team

Harry Ingham, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

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