

# Inspection of St Christopher's Church of England School, Cowley

Temple Road, Cowley, Oxford, Oxfordshire OX4 2HB

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Inspection dates: 15 and 16 March 2022

## **Overall effectiveness**

## **Requires improvement**

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The quality of education

**Requires improvement**

Behaviour and attitudes

**Good**

Personal development

**Good**

Leadership and management

**Good**

Early years provision

**Requires improvement**

Previous inspection grade

Good

## **What is it like to attend this school?**

Pupils are happy at this nurturing and inclusive school. Leaders keep the school values of love, courage and belonging at the heart of their work. They teach all pupils to show understanding and tolerance towards others, both in school and in the wider world.

Pupils play well together at playtimes, enjoying organised games in the beautiful school grounds. Most pupils feel safe. Adults in school help pupils with any worries or concerns they might have. Bullying is rare, but adults sort it out quickly if it happens.

Leaders encourage pupils to make a difference to their community. For example, pupils have organised litter-picking events in the local park. Leaders and pupils are proud that their school is a chosen location for a special Platinum Jubilee tree, planted in honour of the Queen.

Leaders recognise that, in recent years, pupils have not received the quality of education they deserve. However, leaders want the best for pupils. Their vision is for all pupils to 'have the courage to live life in all its fullness'. Leaders know what they need to do to ensure that this vision becomes reality, so that all pupils flourish and succeed.

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

Leaders are developing an ambitious curriculum. In some subjects, for example physical education (PE), leaders have identified the essential knowledge that children need to remember right from the start of Nursery. However, this is not the case for all subjects. Leaders are taking the right action to complete the curriculum so that it builds in a coherent sequence from the start of early years to Year 6.

In some subjects, subject leadership is at an early stage of development. Where this is the case, leaders' subject knowledge is not deep enough to enable them to support teachers to teach effectively. Senior leaders have rightly introduced a programme of training to improve subject knowledge for all leaders so they can lead their subjects well.

Teachers' subject knowledge is not consistently secure across the curriculum. Where subject knowledge is stronger, the tasks that teachers set help all pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), to achieve well. For example, key stage 2 teachers' secure subject knowledge in mathematics means that they plan activities to build and strengthen pupils' understanding in lessons. All pupils in key stage 2, including those with SEND, achieve well in mathematics. However, teachers' subject knowledge is less well developed in some other subjects, for example science. This means that teachers do not always identify and address pupils' needs consistently well.

Leaders want pupils to read well. However, there is variability in how well pupils learn to read in Reception and Year 1. Some staff do not use effective ways of teaching early reading, including in matching reading books to the phonics sounds that pupils know. Strategies used to help the weakest readers catch up quickly are not always effective. Leaders have recently introduced a structured phonics programme to ensure that the inconsistencies in teaching early reading are ironed out.

Most pupils behave well. Pupils treat each other and adults with respect. In early years, children behave well when they are working with adults or completing tasks that have been set up for them. However, children do not always behave well when they are waiting for adult direction or when they do not have the space to let off steam. Children in early years would benefit from spending more time learning in the well-resourced outdoor area.

Leaders have provided a broad range of opportunities to support pupils' personal development. All pupils, including those with SEND, learn about nature, enjoy building dens and experience taking safe risks. They learn how to light fires and climb trees safely. Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, pupils were offered a wide variety of extra-curricular activities, including art, dance, Latin, chess and yoga. Leaders encourage pupils to respond to events in the wider world. Most recently, pupils have written prayers for the people of Ukraine as a response to the current conflict.

Trust leaders and governors are ambitious for all pupils, including those with SEND, to do well. All leaders are fully aware of what needs to be done to improve the school. The trust provides valuable support and resources to leaders to help achieve this.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders have established a strong culture of vigilance. They have clear systems in place to identify those pupils who are at risk of harm. Leaders always work in the best interests of pupils. They work closely with external agencies to ensure that pupils and their families get the help and support they need quickly.

Pupils learn how to keep themselves safe. Leaders work in partnership with local police officers to teach pupils how to stay safe while out and about in the local community. Pupils also have an age-appropriate understanding of how to stay safe when online.

## What does the school need to do to improve?

### (Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Phonics is not taught effectively across Reception and Year 1. In addition, many staff lack expertise in how to support pupils and children who are struggling to learn to read. They do not use appropriate strategies to help these pupils to catch up quickly. Leaders need to make sure that all staff are expertly trained to deliver phonics effectively as a matter of urgency.
- The school's curriculum is not yet effectively sequenced in some subjects and lacks precision about what should be taught and when. This means that pupils and children do not learn enough knowledge across the whole curriculum. Leaders need to complete and embed a coherently sequenced curriculum from early years to Year 6 for all subjects.
- Subject leadership in some foundation subjects is at an early stage of development. Subject leaders do not support staff to implement the curriculum effectively. Leaders and governors should ensure that subject leadership across the whole curriculum is improved.
- Teachers' subject knowledge and pedagogical content knowledge are not consistently strong in all subjects or aspects of learning in all key stages. Tasks that teachers provide do not enable pupils and children to learn effectively across the curriculum. Leaders need to strengthen teachers' subject and pedagogical content knowledge in all subjects, so that all pupils achieve as well as they should.

## 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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	140556
<b>Local authority</b>	Oxfordshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	10211239
<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Academy sponsor-led
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	5 to 11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	386
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	Board of trustees
<b>Chair of trust</b>	Kathy Winrow
<b>Headteacher</b>	Katie Screatton
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.st-christophers-pri.oxon.sch.uk">www.st-christophers-pri.oxon.sch.uk</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	18 and 19 January 2017, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

## Information about this school

- This is an academy with a religious designation.
- The school's most recent section 48 statutory inspection of Anglican and Methodist schools took place in July 2015.
- The school does not currently use any alternative provision.

## Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

This was the first routine inspection the school had 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.

- Inspectors met with the executive headteacher, the head of school, the deputy chief executive officer and the school improvement adviser from the Oxford Diocesan Schools Trust, and three members of the governing body, including the chair of governors. The lead inspector also met with the chair of the board of

trustees and a representative from the Diocese of Oxford.

- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics, science, modern foreign languages and PE. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors also looked at curriculum plans and spoke to subject leaders for other subjects.
- Inspectors reviewed the arrangements for safeguarding by scrutinising safeguarding records and interviewing staff, and through discussions with pupils.
- Inspectors considered the views of parents and carers through their responses to Ofsted Parent View. They gathered the views of pupils and staff through surveys, interviews and discussions conducted throughout the inspection.
- Inspectors reviewed a range of the school's documentation, including self-evaluation reports, minutes of governing body meetings and behaviour incident logs.

### **Inspection team**

Sue Keeling, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Alan Derry

Her Majesty's Inspector

Clare Wilkins

Ofsted Inspector

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