

Inspection of Epping St John's Church of England School

Bury Lane, Epping, Essex CM16 5JB

Inspection dates: 21 and 22 April 2022

Overall effectiveness	Good
The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Good
Sixth-form provision	Good
Previous inspection grade	Not previously inspected under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils, including those in the sixth form, say there have been considerable improvements at their school. One pupil's comment that 'behaviour now is unrecognisable compared to earlier years' typifies the views of many.

The high expectations of pupils' behaviour and learning are met by pupils. The agreed behaviour systems are well understood by pupils and most pupils respond very well. Pupils show positive attitudes to learning, especially in the impressive and growing sixth form. There remains a small number of pupils who struggle to meet these raised expectations.

Pupils establish productive working relationships with teachers. In many lessons, pupils concentrate on their learning. Typically, they enjoy and remember much of what they study. Pupils develop a mature understanding of the importance of education. They also gain a strong grasp of the breadth of faiths, cultures and relationships in modern society.

Pupils appreciate the work of the safeguarding team, the 'Hive' and the sixth-form pastoral team. Pupils say that adults work hard to keep them safe. Many pupils say that adults deal firmly with the occasional incidents of bullying. However, a minority of pupils would welcome more ways to report concerns that they may have.

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

Courageous, effective leadership has brought about considerable improvements in the quality of education and care across Years 7 to 13. Leaders have focused on the 'nuts and bolts' of improving pupil behaviour, and developing the curriculum and how it is delivered. Leaders' vision that pupils develop wisdom, courage and high aspirations underpin these changes.

Leaders have set out what pupils should learn. Subject leaders make sure that pupils learn important information in the right order. This work is paying off. Pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), learn an ambitious curriculum in most subjects.

The curriculum is taught well in many subjects. Having considered how pupils learn best, leaders changed the length and structure of lessons. From Year 7 to Year 13, most teachers consistently follow the school's lesson format. Pupils, including those in the sixth form, know what to expect in lessons.

Teachers help pupils to make connections between different aspects of past learning. Teachers introduce new information in manageable chunks. They make sure that pupils are clear on what they need to do. Teachers provide pupils with lots of opportunities to understand and use new facts and methods. Teachers use assessment well to spot and help pupils who struggle with or misunderstand their

work. Pupils, including those with SEND, remember plenty of what they study. There is still work to be done to ensure the curriculum is taught in line with leaders' expectations in a few subjects.

Pupils who are not fluent readers get suitable help to catch up. Additionally, teachers focus on appropriate subject-specific words in each lesson. They help pupils use this vocabulary accurately in their work. Some teachers are piloting a new subject-specific reading approach. This is having a significant impact in subjects such as modern foreign languages. It is not yet common practice across the curriculum.

Leaders have designed programmes of study that broaden pupils' horizons. Through the curriculum, assemblies and 'drop down days' pupils develop a mature grasp of diversity. They say this helps them better understand and respect people's differences. The school meets the requirements of the Baker Clause, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 8 to 13 with information about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships. Pupils, including in the sixth form, receive suitable careers advice. Pupils are able to make well-informed decisions about their future. The pastoral team provides pupils with appropriate support, including in dealing with mental health issues.

With effective support from BMAT (the trust) and governors, leaders improved many aspects of the school's work. Pupils and teachers say school is 'a changed place'. The impact of the changes is evident in the good quality of education and in the calm, productive atmosphere. Very many pupils understand the importance and benefit of the changes. They say that because there is little disruption it is easier to learn.

Staff use the school's behaviour system well to manage any incidents of poorer behaviour. Incidents that lead to suspensions are falling. Occurrences of bullying are not common. Pupils know who to turn to if they have a concern. Some pupils would like more avenues through which to report and resolve concerns they have.

Leaders gather, and respond to, the views of pupils, parents and staff. However, given the scale of the changes and impact of the national pandemic, there is more to be done to win over the hearts and minds of a small number of pupils, parents and staff.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders have put in place robust systems to ensure pupils are safe and cared for. Through regular questionnaires and focus groups, leaders check that pupils feel safe, and are free from bullying. Pupils are taught about risks they may face, including when working or socialising online.

Staff are alert to their responsibilities for keeping pupils, especially the most vulnerable, safe. Adults know how to register any concerns they may have about a

pupil's well-being. Leaders take appropriate action to support pupils who need additional help.

Governors and the trust check that staff undergo appropriate checks before taking up positions at the school.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Leaders have made considerable improvements to the curriculum. Some changes are new, and in a small number of subjects, teachers are not delivering the curriculum with the same level of consistency as is the case in many subjects. Leaders should continue to give these teachers the support and training so that all subjects are taught consistently well and in line with leaders' expectations.
- Incidents of bullying have fallen. Almost all pupils know who to turn to if they have a worry. A few pupils would like more ways in which to report and resolve concerns they have. Leaders should review and make suitable amendments to the routes through which pupils can report any worries they have.
- There have been many changes for the better at the school. Leaders have raised expectations and brought about greater consistency in teaching and behaviour management. Many pupils, parents and staff understand and value the changes, and the reasons for them. A small proportion do not. Leaders should continue to develop their processes for gathering, and making appropriate responses to, stakeholders' views on the leaders' expectations, the changes being made and their impact.

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	145050
Local authority	Essex
Inspection number	10212566
Type of school	Secondary
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	11 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1021
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	178
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Paul Drayton
Head of school	Michael Yerosimou
Website	eppingstjohnsschool.org
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- Epping St John’s Church of England School is a larger-than-average 11 to 18 secondary school.
- The school joined the BMAT in November 2017.
- The school makes use of one unregistered alternative provision provider and one registered alternative provision provider.
- All Church of England dioceses and the Methodist Church use the National Society’s framework for the Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) under Section 48 of the Education Act 2005. The school’s last SIAMS inspection took place in November 2017. In line with the recently amended inspection cycle, the school could receive a SIAMS inspection at any point from 2022/23 until 2025/26.

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 received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with school leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in art, English, history, modern languages and science.
- For each deep dive, inspectors met with subject leaders, looked at curriculum documentation, visited a sample of lessons, spoke with teachers, spoke with several groups of pupils, including those in the sixth form, about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- The lead inspector also spoke with a subject leader and looked at curriculum documentation in one other subject. Another inspector also looked at a sample of pupils' work in that subject.
- Inspectors met with the assistant chief executive officer of the trust (who also acts as executive headteacher of the school), the headteacher and other school leaders, including the head of the sixth form and the special educational needs coordinator.
- Inspectors looked at school documentation and spoke with leaders, teachers, support staff, governors, pupils, parents and representatives from the trust to establish the effectiveness of the school's safeguarding procedures.
- Inspectors met those responsible for governance. One meeting was held with two governors, including the chair of the governing body. Another meeting was held with the chair of the trust and the trust's chief executive officer.
- An inspector held a phone discussion with a representative from one of the providers of alternative provision that the school uses for a small number of pupils.
- Inspectors spent time observing and speaking with considerable numbers of pupils at breaktimes and lunchtimes.
- Inspectors met with many other pupils in small groups across the course of the inspection.
- Inspectors took account of the views of parents expressed in the 135 responses to Parent View.
- Inspectors considered the views in the 470 responses to the pupil survey. The school's analysis of its numerous surveys of pupils' opinions was also considered. Inspectors also considered the school's records of regular meetings with pupil focus groups.
- Inspectors took into account the 56 responses to the staff survey.

Inspection team

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