

Inspection of a good school: Totternhoe Church of England Academy

Church Road, Totternhoe, Dunstable, Bedfordshire LU6 1RE

Inspection dates:

14 and 15 June 2022

Outcome

Totternhoe Church of England Academy continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils enjoy their learning at this friendly village school. Pupils live up to the school's values of 'ASPIRE' (aspirational, successful, prepared, resilient, empowered) in all that they do. They are kind to each other. They are responsible, caring learners.

Pupils say that this is a safe school. They can explain what bullying is and say that it happens rarely. They know to tell a trusted adult if something worries them. Pupils are confident that the adults in school will help them and resolve any problems straightaway.

Pupils are eager to learn and try hard to do their very best in all of their work. They settle quickly to the tasks they are set. They say that teachers make lessons interesting and fun. Younger pupils are already proud to be independent learners. They say, 'we can fix things ourselves and help each other' if they are stuck.

Pupils enjoy their time outdoors. At playtimes, they practise their sports skills, construct models or read together on cushions. Regular sessions in the woods help pupils to learn about nature and explore new skills including fire-lighting. Older pupils say that residential trips help them to become independent and ready for life.

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

Leaders have put in place a broad, well-sequenced curriculum. They have identified the key things that pupils need to learn and remember. Teachers know how to teach most subjects in the curriculum with confidence and skill. They regularly check what pupils know. They adjust their plans to provide pupils with extra practice when needed. In a few subjects, teachers are not trained sufficiently well and do not always have the subject knowledge they require to teach all subjects as adeptly.

Pupils learn to read effectively from the start of their school life. The youngest children enjoy the book of the week and all the new vocabulary they learn from it. Phonics is taught using a well-organised programme. Adults delivering phonics lessons are well

trained. They use consistent strategies to help pupils to make progress. Books are closely matched to the phonics that pupils are learning. This helps pupils to practise their skills and become confident readers. Most pupils quickly grasp phonic skills and become confident readers. Pupils receive effective extra support if they struggle with reading. Older pupils continue to build their reading skills. They practise these regularly in guided reading lessons. They talk with enthusiasm about books they are reading and that their teachers read aloud to them.

In lessons, pupils get lots of opportunities to practise their learning. For example, the youngest children practise their counting with games and learn simple number bonds. As pupils get older, they build on these foundations. They can apply their learning in more complex ways, so that the oldest pupils tackle challenging calculations with confidence. Pupils throughout the school can explain how what they already know helps them to learn new facts and strategies.

Pupils behave sensibly in lessons and around the school. They know their teachers' expectations and routines and respond well to these. This means that everyone can get on with their learning. Discussions in lessons are focused. Teachers use questions to help pupils to check their understanding and extend their thinking. Pupils work well together. They help each other with their learning.

Leaders are well trained to identify the needs of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). They use a range of assessments to understand the needs of pupils. Teachers understand how to adjust their plans to support pupils' learning. Leaders put in place the extra support that pupils with SEND need, so that they are able to access the same learning as their classmates. Leaders are tenacious in seeking support from external professionals to enable pupils with SEND to progress well in their learning and development.

Pupils have many opportunities to develop character. Older pupils are keen to take on responsibility. They undertake roles such as those of ambassadors, house captains and energy monitors. Pupils attending collective worship club help to plan assemblies. Pupils learn to listen, discuss and share respectfully. The youngest children work together to test out their ideas through play. Older pupils debate issues such as logging. Children learn to share equipment kindly from early years. Leaders use assemblies and the curriculum to challenge discrimination and prepare pupils for the wider world. Older pupils are well prepared for the transition to secondary school.

Adults feel part of an ambitious team. One adult reflected the views of many, saying, 'We have high expectations for the children and the adults here.' They appreciate the concern for their well-being shown by leaders. Staff value the opportunities for support and development provided by the multi-academy trust.

In discussion with the headteacher, the inspector agreed that a useful focus for the next inspection may be the training teachers receive and how this helps them develop their subject knowledge to teach the full curriculum.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders have created a culture where safeguarding is given the highest priority. They take their responsibility to keep children safe seriously. Staff are well trained and know the role they play in recording all concerns promptly. This enables leaders to identify risks and act straightaway. Leaders signpost families to early help services. Leaders work constructively with outside agencies to ensure that pupils and their families receive appropriate support.

Pupils learn how to keep themselves safe and healthy. Pupils and staff are vigilant about online risks.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In a few subjects, teachers are not delivering the curriculum as effectively as they do elsewhere. This is because they do not have the subject knowledge to deliver leaders' plans well. This means that pupils do not build their understanding and remember the things they have been taught. Leaders need to ensure that staff receive training, so that they are confident to implement leaders' curriculum intentions well.

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 a section 5 inspection immediately.

This is the first section 8 inspection since we judged the predecessor school, Totternhoe Lower School, to be good in October 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	145426
Local authority	Central Bedfordshire
Inspection number	10227559
Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	2 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	194
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Carole Bennet
Headteacher	Olivia Burke
Website	www.totternhoe.beds.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- Totternhoe Church of England Academy joined the Diocese of St Albans Multi-Academy Trust in January 2018.
- Totternhoe school leaders do not use any providers of alternative education.

Information about this inspection

- This was the first routine inspection the school had received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. The inspector discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders, and has taken that into account in her evaluation.
- The inspector held meetings with senior leaders, including the headteacher, governors and representatives of the trustees. The inspector also spoke to other leaders, staff, pupils and the school's effectiveness partner from Bedfordshire.
- The inspector carried out deep dives in early reading, mathematics and history. For each deep dive, the inspector met with subject leaders, looked at curriculum plans, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. In early reading, this took the form of listening to pupils read to a familiar adult.

- The inspector also spoke to pupils in the lunch hall and on the playground.
- As part of the evaluation of the school's safeguarding processes, the inspector reviewed the school's single central record and met with the designated safeguarding lead.
- The inspector reviewed a range of school documents, including the school development plan, curriculum plans and school policies.
- The inspector reviewed the 67 responses that were submitted by parents and carers to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, and also considered the 44 free-text responses from parents. The inspector also considered 24 responses to the Ofsted staff survey.

Inspection team

Lynne Williams, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

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