

# Inspection of Appleton Church of England (A) Primary School

Church Road, Appleton, Abingdon, Oxfordshire OX13 5JL

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Inspection dates: 14 and 15 June 2022

**Overall effectiveness** **Good**

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The quality of education	<b>Good</b>
Behaviour and attitudes	<b>Good</b>
Personal development	<b>Good</b>
Leadership and management	<b>Good</b>
Early years provision	<b>Good</b>
Previous inspection grade	Outstanding

This school was last inspected 14 years ago and judged 'Outstanding' under a previous inspection framework. This reflected the school's overall effectiveness under the inspection framework in use at the time.

From then until November 2020, the school was exempted by law from routine inspection, so there has been a longer gap than usual between inspections. Judgements in this report are based on the current inspection framework and also reflect changes that may have happened at any point since the last inspection.

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

Leaders have high expectations. Their vision of 'building wisely for life' is at the heart of everything the school does. Relationships between staff and pupils are based on mutual respect. Pupils are kind and work alongside their peers in a supportive and thoughtful way. Staff encourage pupils to become successful, independent and resilient learners.

Pupils describe their school as safe and welcoming. They form strong friendships and learn to take responsibility for themselves and others. Pupils make a difference both in school and the wider community. For instance, pupils regularly raise funds for charity and work with residents of the local care home. Pupils also organise and manage the ever-popular lunchtime 'happiness hub'. This makes the atmosphere around school peaceful and harmonious.

Pupils say that bullying is rare and, if it does happen, staff will deal with it straight away. They enjoy taking part in after-school clubs, especially sports clubs, and are proud of their achievements. Parents are supportive of the school, appreciating the hard work of staff and the care taken to get to know every single child and family. As one parent commented, 'Teachers are invested genuinely in every aspect of our children's development.'

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

Leaders are ambitious for all pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), to learn and achieve well. Overall, they have designed a well-crafted and coherent curriculum. For example, in subjects such as mathematics and science, the essential knowledge that pupils should learn and remember is identified precisely from the start of Reception to the end of Year 6. This means pupils are prepared for their next steps in learning. Children in the early years gain a rich understanding of the world around them, from the school's outdoor environment to the geography, wildlife and culture of Australasia. However, in a handful of subjects, curriculum design is not as strong. Consequently, pupils do not deepen their understanding of these subjects as well as they could.

Pupils look forward to their lessons. They say that teachers make learning fun and exciting. Teachers use assessment as a fundamental part of their practice. They check on what the pupils are learning and adjust what they teach accordingly. Leaders make sure that staff identify pupils with SEND accurately and provide pupils with the resources and support they need. Staff are well trained and help pupils link in their work to prior learning. However, sometimes teachers do not adapt work effectively enough for pupils with SEND. This means that some pupils with SEND do not achieve as well as they could.

Leaders prioritise a love of reading. Staff read aloud high-quality books from a range of authors and cultures. This exposes pupils to literature that they might not read

themselves. Right from the start, children in Reception begin to learn phonics through a systematic programme. They learn to use their phonics to read and write words with confidence. This ensures that children are well prepared to start Year 1. Staff in key stage 1 make sure that the books pupils read help them practise the sounds they learn in lessons. Most pupils who are weaker readers benefit from a range of activities that help them learn to read confidently and fluently. However, sometimes the approaches used with some pupils with SEND to help them catch up are not precise enough to help pupils make progress.

Pupils throughout the school, including in the early years, behave very well. They have good manners and try hard to do what is right. Overall, pupils attend school regularly and make a prompt positive start to the day. Pupils rightly explore healthy relationships and appropriate behaviour within relationships in an age-appropriate way. Pupils know how to take care of their mental health and well-being. They listen to different views with respect and consideration. They are appreciative of others and celebrate diversity, rather than focus on difference. Pupils enjoy the extra-curricular and enrichment opportunities which leaders are in the process of building up to pre-pandemic levels.

Governors work with leaders to ensure that the quality of education improves continually. They care about the well-being of the team, and staff really appreciate this. Staff are proud to be part of this happy and effective team. Leaders rightly invest heavily in training for staff, which is focused on appropriate, well-targeted areas. Leaders, including governors, are knowledgeable and have an accurate understanding of the school's strengths. However, they are not always sharp enough in monitoring some aspects of the school's work, such as behaviour and attendance. This would provide greater understanding of the impact of their work and help shape next steps even more precisely.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders and staff know the school's community well. This helps staff to notice when pupils may be at risk of harm. Leaders provide regular training for staff, who report concerns swiftly. Leaders follow these up with prompt action. They work well with other external agencies to support families. Leaders ensure that safer recruitment procedures for new staff are consistently followed.

Pupils learn about personal safety through focused safety weeks, assemblies and NSPCC programmes. Pupils have ongoing internet safety training identifying the risks that could affect them, such as when using social media platforms.

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

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

- In some foundation subjects, the curriculum is not as precisely sequenced as it is in others. As a result, pupils do not build their knowledge and skills as well as they could. Leaders should continue their work to make sure that the curriculum in all subjects is well designed, and identify the key knowledge and skills pupils should learn.
- Some pupils with SEND do not achieve as well as they could because teaching is not always adapted sufficiently enough to meet their needs. This includes the support some pupils get to catch up in their reading. Leaders should ensure that teachers are well trained and adapt their teaching so that all pupils can achieve consistently highly.
- Leaders' and governors' oversight in some aspects of the school's work, such as behaviour and attendance, is not as sharp as it is for others. This means that actions to improve the school are not always as finely tuned as they could be. Leaders should sharpen up their monitoring processes so they can effectively evaluate the full impact of their work and, where necessary, hold school leaders to account.

## How can I feed back my views?

You can use 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>	123219
<b>Local authority</b>	Oxfordshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	10228738
<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary aided
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4 to 11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	181
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair of governing body</b>	Simon Hawkes
<b>Headteacher</b>	Amy Carnell
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.appleton.oxon.sch.uk">www.appleton.oxon.sch.uk</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	13 and 14 February 2019, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

## Information about this school

- This school is a voluntary aided Church of England school. The most recent section 48 inspection took place in March 2019.
- 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 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 held meetings with the headteacher, assistant headteacher and senior teacher. The lead inspector met with two governors, including the chair of governors. He also held two separate meetings with an officer from Oxfordshire local authority and a representative from the diocese of Oxford.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in reading, mathematics, science and PE. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a

sample of lessons, spoke to teachers and teaching assistants, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at a sample of pupils' work. The lead inspector also heard pupils read.

- To inspect safeguarding, inspectors reviewed a wide range of safeguarding documentation, including the school's record of recruitment checks. The lead inspector met with the designated safeguarding lead. Inspectors also spoke with pupils and staff.
- Inspectors took account of parents' responses to school surveys, Ofsted Parent View and parents' written comments. An inspector also talked with groups of parents on the morning of the first day of inspection.
- Inspectors gathered pupils' views throughout the day, including during lesson visits, as well as playtimes and lunchtime.
- Inspectors met with a range of staff to gather their views about the school and took account of staff's responses to Ofsted's confidential staff questionnaire.

### **Inspection team**

Alan Derry, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Howard Fisher

Ofsted Inspector

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