

Inspection of Bodiam Church of England Primary School

Castle Road, Bodiam, Robertsbridge, East Sussex TN32 5UH

Inspection dates: 13 and 14 September 2022

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

The quality of education

Requires improvement

Behaviour and attitudes

Good

Personal development

Good

Leadership and management

Requires improvement

Early years provision

Good

Previous inspection grade

Good

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are happy and proud to belong to a school which is valued as an important part of the local community. Pupils enjoy learning and relish the many enrichment opportunities on offer. Adults take the time to get to know the pupils well. Parents appreciate the supportive relationships they and their children have with staff. Everyone describes the school as 'one big family'.

Leaders want pupils to 'be the best that they can be'. However, this ambition is not currently being met. In some subjects, pupils do not yet benefit from a carefully sequenced curriculum that builds their knowledge over time.

Behaviour at the school is strong. Leaders have high expectations of behaviour and pupils know the 'Golden Rules'. Relationships are warm and respectful. The school's values of compassion, friendship and tolerance are woven through every aspect of the school. Pupils play well together. They are kind and polite to each other, adults and visitors.

Pupils learn about looking after themselves, including how to keep themselves physically and mentally healthy. They feel safe and secure at school. Pupils understand what bullying is. While they do not think it is a problem at their school, they are right to be confident that staff would deal with any worries they had.

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

Pupils do not learn as well as they should in some subjects. Until recently, leaders had not identified the important curriculum knowledge that pupils need to know. This means that teachers are not always clear about what they need to teach. Assessment and enquiry questions in some curriculum areas do not link to the knowledge that pupils have been taught. Teachers are not, therefore, always identifying gaps in learning and adapting the curriculum accordingly. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) do not achieve as well as they might. Leaders have not ensured that appropriate systems are in place to identify their needs and meet them in a timely way.

Over time, leaders have not prioritised staff's professional development. This means that staff are not equipped with the expertise needed to deliver the full breadth of the curriculum. This is particularly the case with early reading. There is not a consistent approach across the school because staff have not all had the necessary training to deliver the phonics and early reading curriculum effectively. Where staff have received relevant training and additional support, as is the case with the early years, the teaching of early reading is stronger. However, reading books are not always matched to the sounds that pupils know. This means that sometimes pupils struggle to read words because they have not been taught the phonics knowledge they need. Staff do not have the expertise they need to provide precise support to

the weakest readers. Leaders are aware of these weaknesses and are taking appropriate steps to improve the early reading curriculum.

The curriculum for mathematics is stronger. Having been taught in the early years for some time, the published scheme of work has been gradually introduced across the school over the last year and is now delivered consistently well. Mathematical knowledge is sequenced to build over time. Pupils have lots of opportunities to learn about numbers as soon as they start in Reception. This is typical of the well-thought-out early years curriculum. Children enjoy the learning activities in the indoor and outdoor environments. Important skills and knowledge are sequenced over the year, and opportunities for pupils to revisit prior learning are planned for.

The personal development of pupils is a strength of the school. Leaders make sure that learning extends beyond the classroom. They prioritise enriching experiences for all pupils, including visits to the theatre, galleries and the zoo. Teachers take every opportunity to engage pupils in meaningful discussion. Pupils learn about responsibility from their first day and to be respectful of the opinions of others. There is an active school council and a wealth of additional roles that pupils eagerly apply for. Leaders listen to what pupils have to say and value their opinions.

The newly appointed interim executive headteacher has an accurate view of what is needed to improve the school. He has clear plans to implement the necessary actions, drawing on support from the local authority and the diocese. He is well supported by senior leaders and governors, who have worked hard to stabilise the school during a difficult time. Leaders are unified in their determination to improve the quality of education. Work on curriculum design is underway but is too recent to have had the desired impact. Monitoring systems have been developed but are not yet in operation. Dedicated staff are enthusiastic about the positive changes that have already taken place and about leaders' consideration of their well-being and workload as well as development.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders prioritise safeguarding training for all staff. They are vigilant with safer recruitment procedures. Governors check that the school's safeguarding arrangements are implemented consistently.

Staff are clear about their safeguarding responsibilities. They know the pupils and their families well. Staff know how to identify pupils who need help or are at risk of abuse. Leaders seek the support of outside agencies when necessary.

Pupils know how to keep safe online and understand how to keep themselves safe beyond their local community. Parents who responded to Ofsted Parent View have confidence that children are safe in school.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Leadership of curriculum design and delivery has not been effective over time. Consequently, pupils do not learn well in all subjects. Leaders should ensure that component knowledge is sequenced to reach agreed end points in all subjects and assure themselves that the revised curriculum is being implemented as intended.
- Until recently, leaders have not strategically planned for the professional development of staff. This means that staff do not have the knowledge and skills they need to teach all subjects well. Leaders should ensure that staff are well trained to deliver the full breadth of the curriculum effectively.
- Not all staff have the expertise needed to teach early reading well. As a result, some pupils do not learn to read well enough. Leaders should ensure that staff receive appropriate training and development to skilfully support all pupils to be successful readers.
- The school does not meet the needs of pupils with SEND well enough. Leaders should ensure that systems are in place for the timely identification of pupils' additional needs and that they get the precise support they need to be successful learners.

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.

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	114529
Local authority	East Sussex
Inspection number	10242093
Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	80
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chairs of governing body	Beverley Waldis Phillip Hinde
Headteacher	Jon Goulding
Website	www.bodiamceschool.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	5 July 2017, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school is currently led by an interim executive headteacher, appointed in June 2022.
- The school is part of the Riverside Federation with Etchingam Church of England Primary School. The two schools share one governing body.
- There have been significant recent changes in governance, including two newly appointed co-chairs.
- The religious character of the school was inspected under section 48 of the Education Act 2005 in October 2016. The religious character was judged to be outstanding.
- The school does not currently use any alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded 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 met with the interim executive headteacher, the head of school and the special educational needs and/or disabilities coordinator.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: reading, mathematics, science and history. For each deep dive, inspectors met with subject leaders, considered curriculum planning, visited a sample of lessons, talked with teachers, spoke to pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. Inspectors also heard some pupils read and talked to pupils across the school about their love of reading.
- The inspection team also looked at curriculum plans for additional subjects and reviewed pupils' work, including in personal, social and health education.
- The lead inspector met with the two co-chairs of the school's governing body and spoke with representatives from the local authority and the Diocese of Chichester education department.
- Inspectors reviewed a range of documents, including the school's self-evaluation, improvement plans, minutes of recent governor body meetings and records of visits to the school by the local authority and diocese.
- The views of staff and pupils were gathered through informal discussions.
- The inspection team considered the views of staff through their responses to Ofsted's confidential staff survey. They also met with staff during the inspection.
- Inspectors reviewed 29 responses to the parent survey, including the free-text comments that parents made. Inspectors also spoke to parents and carers at the end of the first day of the inspection.
- To inspect the school's safeguarding arrangements, inspectors talked with pupils and staff and reviewed the school's policies, documents and procedures, including records of recruitment checks. The lead inspector met with the school's designated leader for safeguarding. Throughout the inspection, inspectors considered and checked the culture of safeguarding within the school.

Inspection team

Vicky Matthews, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Kirstine Boon

Ofsted Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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