

Inspection of Churchwood Primary Academy

Church-in-the-Wood Lane, St Leonards-on-Sea, East Sussex TN38 9PB

Inspection dates: 11 and 12 October 2022

Overall effectiveness	Good
The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Outstanding
Leadership and management	Good
Early years provision	Outstanding
Previous inspection grade	Good

What is it like to attend this school?

This is a school that sits at the heart of the local community. Older pupils are particularly understanding of the needs of others. Pupils across the school act responsibly. They know that some of their friends find it hard to behave perfectly all of the time. This includes those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). However, more than one pupil told inspectors that people are mostly kind at their school. Another pupil reflected that 'Sometimes people are just rude to others. It's because they are too competitive.' Others in the group agreed. They also agreed that staff work hard to make school enjoyable and safe for everyone.

Staff have high expectations. They want all pupils to succeed. Leaders understand the barriers many pupils face. They ensure that the school's curriculum is enriched with additional opportunities as far as possible. This includes in early years and in the school's specialist class for pupils with autism spectrum disorder. Older pupils in key stage 2 are looking forward to their impending residential trip. One younger pupil told an inspector: 'My mum and dad wanted me to come here, and it turned out they were right! Because the school is good.' Inspectors agree.

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

Teaching and support staff are very focused on providing high-quality education that meets the needs of all pupils who attend Churchwood. Children in early years benefit from a similar personalised approach. Children in the new Reception Year have already settled well. Visits to both nursery and reception classrooms showed well-planned learning environments. Developing children's language and communication skills is given a high priority. Specialist support staff are skilled at delivering speech and language therapy from the outset. This support is particularly effective for pupils with SEND, including in early years.

Staff know pupils well. They are particularly adept at providing for pupils with SEND. This includes senior leaders, who constantly evaluate how the school is doing. Leaders know and celebrate the school's strengths. They also understand the things that need to be better.

The school's curriculum is constantly evolving. Subject leaders are supported effectively by senior leaders from the school and the trust. This means that for most subjects, pupils are following a well-organised programme of learning. Where this is not so strongly the case, leaders are aware and have started to review and revise planning.

Subjects such as mathematics, English and science are strengths of the curriculum. Leaders attach great importance to ensuring that pupils develop their reading skills early and securely. They understand that pupils who cannot read confidently will struggle across the wider curriculum. Developing pupils' interest in books has been a priority over time. However, fresh initiatives also help with this. Recent appointments

of 'reading ambassadors' and the school's book vending machine were hot topics when inspectors talked to pupils.

The school recently introduced a new phonics programme. Consequently, staff received some additional training. Resources to support them to deliver the programme are mostly in place. Most staff are confident and have the expertise to teach phonics well. Some need additional training to ensure that they teach phonics as effectively as they could.

The personal development and pastoral care of pupils are strong. The school provides pupils with a wide range of enrichment experiences, both on and off site. Older pupils are enthusiastic about visits to local castles or 'going up against' another school at football. Pupils learn about equality and diversity through the school's personal, social and health education programme. This is supplemented by age-appropriate relationships and sex education. The school's own 'superhero values' support pupils in respecting others and building confidence and self-esteem.

All parents and carers that inspectors spoke to at the start of both days of the inspection were very positive about the school. This included praise for the way the school had supported families during the COVID-19 pandemic. A minority of parents who responded to Ofsted's online survey, Ofsted Parent View, were less positive about some aspects of the school.

Governance is provided by the multi-academy trust and by a local governing board. These arrangements are effective at holding leaders to account. Leaders are supported well by officers from the trust and from well-developed partnerships with other trust schools. This works particularly well for pupils with SEND, who benefit from the shared expertise across the trust's schools. The trust also provides leaders with additional capacity to manage finances and human resources, as well as ensuring that policies are effective and updated in a timely manner.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

The culture to safeguard pupils is strong. Staff know what to do if they have concerns. The school's extended safeguarding team works closely with external agencies to ensure that pupils and families get the support they need. This includes pupils who do not attend school as often as they should.

The school and trust work closely with the local authority to ensure that systems and procedures to protect the welfare, health and safety of pupils and staff are fit for purpose. Staff safeguarding training is up to date. Pre-employment checks are carried out diligently and in a timely manner.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Not all staff are as confident or as expert as they should be when teaching phonics. Some refresher training has taken place. However, there are inconsistencies in the way the school's new phonics programme is being implemented in classrooms. Leaders should address this issue as a matter of urgency so that pupils benefit from consistently high-quality phonics teaching.
- Some curriculum subjects need further development regarding the long-term planning and sequencing of the knowledge pupils will learn over time. Some subjects are more advanced than others. More needs to be done to ensure that curriculum planning, including in subjects such as music and modern foreign languages, enables teachers to design learning that builds on what pupils already know and can do. This will ensure that pupils are better prepared for their transition to secondary school across all curriculum subjects offered by the school.

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	141261
Local authority	East Sussex
Inspection number	10242068
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	248
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Professor Christopher Pole
Principal	Ros Collett
Website	www.churchwoodprimaryacademy.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	27 and 28 June 2017, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school is part of the University of Brighton Academies Trust.
- The school has a local governing board which provides some aspects of governance through delegated powers from the board of trustees.
- The school provides nursery provision for children from the age of two. It also operates a small specially resourced provision for up to eight pupils with autism spectrum disorder in key stage 2.
- The school currently uses one alternative provision from within the trust.

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 held a wide range of meetings with the principal, curriculum leaders, the SENCo and teaching and support staff.
- The lead inspector met with the interim chair of the local governing board and a member of the board of trustees. Inspectors also met with the trust's executive director of education and standards as well as other officers from the trust.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: reading, mathematics, science and history. Deep dives included visiting lessons, looking at pupils' work, and talking to leaders, teachers and pupils. The lead inspector heard pupils read to a known adult.
- Inspectors checked a range of policies and documents, including the school's single central record. They also reviewed the school's website and other records regarding the welfare, health and safety of pupils and staff.
- Inspectors gathered evidence to explore the impact of pupils' behaviour, the school's wider curriculum offer and how leaders support staff with their workload.
- Inspectors talked to pupils throughout the inspection to gain their views about the school. Two different meetings were held with representative groups of pupils. Inspectors also talked to staff individually or in small groups on both days of the inspection.
- Inspectors considered the views of parents submitted via Ofsted's parent survey. A letter was also received from a parent. Inspectors also met and talked to parents at the start of both days of the inspection.
- Inspectors took into account additional evidence submitted to Ofsted throughout the inspection.
- The views of staff were also considered through Ofsted's confidential staff survey.

Inspection team

Clive Close, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Maria Roberts	His Majesty's Inspector
Debbie Bennett	Ofsted Inspector

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