

Inspection of a good school: Bidborough Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School

Spring Lane, Bidborough, Tunbridge Wells, Kent TN3 0UE

Inspection dates:

9 and 10 November 2022

Outcome

Bidborough Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils feel happy and safe and are well cared for in this school. They form strong relationships with one another and with staff. Older pupils act as 'buddies' and support younger pupils. One pupil said, 'Buddies make us feel happy because we have someone to play with.' Pupils learn about how to enjoy their lives but also how to deal with life when things are harder. A culture of care pervades the school.

Leaders are ambitious. They have high expectations for every pupil. They have made sure that the school curriculum matches pupils' needs and interests. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) receive helpful support in lessons. This allows them to learn confidently alongside their peers. One parent's comment, 'This is a wonderful school, it is very inclusive and allows children to feel part of a wider family,' reflects the views of many.

Pupils behave well across the school. They are courteous and respectful and enjoy spending time with one another. On the rare occasion that bullying happens, adults swiftly resolve this. Children in the early years settle quickly into life in school because of the well-established routines in place.

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

Leaders have created a well-constructed curriculum. They think carefully about what pupils need to learn across a broad range of subjects and make helpful links between subjects that encourage pupils to practise and deepen what they have learned. For example, pupils use their knowledge of geography to understand where events happened to support learning in history. Leaders help teachers to manage their workload. They have introduced many changes to the curriculum over the past year and

have supported teachers in its implementation. Teachers receive valuable support from subject leaders. As a result, teachers have strong subject knowledge.

Pupils develop a wide range of knowledge across many subjects. Teachers ask helpful and relevant questions in lessons that encourage pupils to think deeply about what they learned. For example, in mathematics, teachers ask pupils questions at the start of lessons to check what they can recall from previous learning. However, the assessment of what pupils know and understand is less refined in some subjects beyond English and mathematics. Teachers too often focus on what has been covered, rather than what pupils can recall, and assume that if pupils have been taught something, they will remember it. This means that some pupils do not have the knowledge needed to succeed in some lessons.

The school ensures that pupils have a love of reading and become confident readers. Children in the early years settle well to phonics lessons. They learn about the sounds needed to read simple words. As a result, children are keen to share books with adults and enact stories they have been read when at play. As pupils move into key stage 1, they develop their reading skills well. Staff identify the needs of pupils with SEND swiftly. Staff support pupils who have fallen behind with their reading through effective interventions. This helps pupils to catch up quickly. Teachers select interesting and increasingly challenging texts for pupils to read as they move through key stage 2. They use questioning well to help pupils to understand what they read. Pupils use what they learn in reading lessons to develop their writing.

Pupils develop strong mathematical knowledge. Children in the early years use the mathematical language they have learned to enhance their play. For example, children explore measurements when playing in the 'mud kitchen' and count numbers to ten when making cakes out of play dough. As pupils move through the school, they build the skills and knowledge needed to apply what they have learned in a range of subjects.

Pupils behave well in lessons. They show interest in what they learn and build positive relationships with one another. Leaders have clear and consistent expectations for behaviour. This creates a calm and purposeful atmosphere in lessons.

Pupils are given rich opportunities to learn beyond the curriculum. They engage in a range of extra-curricular clubs that are well attended, including by pupils with SEND and disadvantaged pupils. Pupils develop their confidence and expand their interests because of these wider experiences. They play an active role in the running of the school. For example, pupils take on roles within the 'pupil leadership team' and act as 'sports ambassadors'. They connect with children from schools beyond the UK. This develops pupils' understanding of cultural differences.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders clearly articulate the whole-school approach to keeping pupils safe. Staff receive detailed training that helps them to identify when a pupil may be at risk of harm. Pupils

learn about how to keep themselves safe online. Older pupils train as 'mental health champions', helping them to spot the signs of worries about mental well-being in themselves and others.

Leaders act swiftly regarding concerns raised about the safety of pupils. They work diligently with families to make sure they receive the support they need. As a result, pupils are safe and families feel supported.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Some pupils do not develop the knowledge needed to succeed in lessons beyond English and mathematics. Teachers have good knowledge of what has been taught but do not always check what has been retained by pupils. Leaders need to refine teachers' assessment of pupils' understanding in subjects beyond English and mathematics so they are better informed of what their pupils have retained and can build the next steps on that.

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 an ungraded inspection, and it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on an ungraded inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school would now receive a higher or lower grade, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection, which is carried out under section 5 of the Act. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the ungraded inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the ungraded inspection a graded inspection immediately.

This is the second ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be good in July 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.

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	118598
Local authority	Kent
Inspection number	10241832
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	207
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Robert Masters
Headteacher	Julie Burton
Website	www.bidborough.kent.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	5 July 2017, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school is a voluntary controlled Church of England primary school and part of the Diocese of Rochester.
- The school does not currently use any alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. The inspector discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and has taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- The inspector met with the headteacher, other leaders and a range of staff at the school. The inspector met with the chair of governors and four members of the governing body. The inspector also spoke with representatives from the local authority and the Diocese of Rochester.
- The inspector carried out deep dives in these subjects: reading, mathematics and history. For each deep dive, the inspector discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about

their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. The inspector also considered the curriculum in other subjects.

- The inspector reviewed a wide range of documents, including those related to the governance of the school.
- To inspect safeguarding, the inspector met with the designated safeguarding lead and considered safeguarding documents and records. This included the school's records and plans for supporting pupils who have been referred to outside agencies.

Inspection team

Graham Chisnell, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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