

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

Vicarage Avenue, White Notley, Witham, Essex CM8 1RZ

Inspection date:

13 December 2022

Outcome

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

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils live up to the school's 'LIFE' values: learning, inclusion, faith and environment.

Learning to read takes priority. Pupils benefit greatly from the comments parents and staff write in their reading records. These detail what a pupil can and cannot do when they read. So, the adults in pupils' lives know how to help them progress.

Pupils understand what it means to be inclusive. They treat others kindly, regardless of any differences between them. Unkind words or actions are uncommon. Consequently, bullying seldom occurs.

Pupils' faith, particularly in their trust of staff and one another, is strong. This stems from the relationships they grow from the moment they start school. Older pupils buddy up with younger ones. They get special time together to enjoy a storybook and chat about their week. During breaktimes, pupil 'play leaders' arrange activities for pupils to enjoy. Such positive interactions ensure pupils are happy and safe at school.

Pupils value the environment, both near and far. The school council successfully bid for local funding to enhance the school site. Pupils can relax in the sensory garden or harvest the fruits and vegetables they grow. There are longstanding links with an overseas school. These help pupils expand their knowledge of people and places they may not otherwise encounter.

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

Leaders, including governors, work wisely to bring about change. Governors actively support leaders and staff with monitoring the curriculum and school systems. Working together in this way fosters positive relationships and means staff enjoy working in the

school. In turn, this makes school a happy, welcoming place for pupils and their parents.

Leaders recently introduced a new phonics programme. Well-trained staff teach using the programme's phrases and gestures. These help pupils remember the sounds letters make. The programme's consistent routines teach children in the early years to look at and listen to staff. This sets them up well for learning. Leaders carefully audited the books pupils receive. Their efforts ensure staff give pupils a book they can read confidently. Pupils then happily spend their lunchtime in the library 'devouring' books with the pupil librarians. Most pupils achieve highly in reading. For the few weaker readers, dedicated support staff help them revise the sounds they need to know. In time, this helps these pupils read more challenging books.

Leaders take a measured approach to curriculum development. They review and improve a few subjects at a time. This allows them to check changes are working as they intend. In all subjects, curriculum plans set out the content pupils learn from Reception to Year 6. This includes the subject-specific vocabulary pupils need to know. Teachers generally use these plans well. They arrange appropriate activities with suitable resources that help pupils embed the knowledge leaders want them to know.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) receive kind, patient support. Staff make simple adjustments that help pupils to learn. For example, showing how the mouth moves to make sounds or redirecting a pupil calmly to focus them on the task at hand. Staff schedule catch-up support for pupils who need it sensibly. This means pupils with SEND experience the full curriculum with their classmates.

Across the school, staff's use of assessment to support pupils varies. Where it works better, staff observe pupils closely. Staff then provide prompts that help pupils to rectify mistakes when they happen. However, this is not consistently the case. On occasion, staff may congratulate pupils for work that is incorrect or move pupils on to more challenging content before they are ready. Also, assessment and targeted support for pupils with SEND are sometimes too reliant on subjective opinion. Ultimately, these issues mean staff sometimes do not capture precisely what a pupil knows or can do to inform what they learn next. This slows some pupils' learning.

Work to promote pupils' wider development is a distinctive feature of this school. Leaders use additional funding to positively promote healthy lifestyles. For example, pupils across the school receive coaching in tennis. They go on to fare well in countywide inter-school competitions. Because they link to pupils' interests, attendance at after-school clubs is high. These clubs include astronomy, board games and netball, to name but a few. The personal, social and health education curriculum is very well planned, particularly to teach pupils about relationships. In the early years, children learn how to be a good friend. By Years 5 and 6, pupils learn how to identify and respond to peer pressure. Learning to take part and build respectful relationships prepares pupils well for life in modern Britain.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Pupils use a colour-based feelings system to let an adult know when they need to talk. This, along with the 'big questions' they discuss, empowers pupils to voice their concerns. Well-trained leaders and staff use their observations and discussions with pupils to report and record concerns. Leaders then orchestrate suitable support, working well with external agencies.

Governors are particularly knowledgeable about safeguarding. It means they can use school visits to check safeguarding systems thoroughly. They closely review the pre-employment checks on new staff. They also quiz staff about their training, checking staff understand their responsibilities.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Sometimes, how staff make and use assessment lacks precision. As a result, pupils occasionally move on to more challenging work before they are ready, and some of the additional support for pupils with SEND could be better matched to their barriers to learning. Leaders should train staff in how to use assessment to efficiently check pupils' understanding to inform teaching or the extra help pupils with SEND receive.

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 April 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	115111
Local authority	Essex
Inspection number	10255173
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	103
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Ruth Hale
Headteacher	Ruth Baugh
Website	www.whitenotley.essex.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	23 May 2017, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The headteacher works in an executive capacity across three primary schools. To support this, the governing body appointed a head of school.
- The school is part of the Diocese of Chelmsford.
- The school has a religious character, Church of England, and was last inspected under section 48 of the Education Act 2005 on 7 December 2017. The school's next section 48 inspection will be within eight school years.
- There is before- and after-school childcare for pupils attending the school. It is run by school staff and managed by school leaders.
- Leaders do not currently use alternative provision for any pupils.

Information about this inspection

- 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 executive headteacher, the head of school, the

special educational needs coordinator, six governors and a representative working for the local authority.

- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics and history. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to staff, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. The lead inspector also listened to a sample of pupils read to a familiar adult.
- Inspectors also reviewed curriculum documentation for all other subjects.
- To inspect safeguarding, the lead inspector met with the designated safeguarding lead to review records. The lead inspector met with the office manager to scrutinise the single central record of recruitment and vetting checks. Between them, inspectors also spoke to governors, staff and pupils, and reviewed surveys to further evaluate safeguarding.
- Inspectors reviewed a range of other school documentation and policies, including minutes of governors' meetings and the school development plan.
- To gather pupils' views, inspectors spent time observing and speaking to pupils. Inspectors also took account of the 28 responses to Ofsted's pupil survey.
- Inspectors gathered parents' views by reviewing the 34 responses and 24 free-text responses submitted to the online survey, Ofsted Parent View.
- Inspectors gathered staff members' views by speaking to several of them and reviewing the 19 responses to Ofsted's staff survey.

Inspection team

Daniel Short, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Nicola Shadbolt

Ofsted Inspector

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