

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

Little Munden Primary School, Church Lane, Dane End, Ware, Hertfordshire SG12 0NR

Inspection date:

2 February 2023

Outcome

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

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils enjoy coming to school. They are supported by kind and nurturing adults who want to help pupils to achieve their best. This supports all pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), to be successful in lessons.

There are high expectations for pupils' conduct and behaviour. This is demonstrated throughout the school, both in classrooms and at playtimes. Pupils cooperate well with each other and say that it is very rare for anything like bullying to happen. They know that it is important to share with adults if they are worried, and say that adults are trusted to sort out any problems they might have. As a result, they are safe and happy in school.

Pupils access a range of additional experiences that develop their personal qualities and values. This includes the programme of assemblies. These are designed to equip pupils to better understand their place in the wider world. Lessons also support pupils to explore how concepts of spirituality and faith have a role in their lives. This is further supported by whole-school trips that broaden their horizons beyond the school's rural setting.

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

Leaders have high expectations for the education offered to all pupils. They have set out an ambitious body of knowledge that pupils will learn, starting in Nursery. Recent developments in many subjects have led to clear and well-thought-through curriculum plans. These plans detail the specific knowledge and skills that pupils need to know. However, a small number of curriculum areas are not clear enough. This leads to lessons where teachers do not consistently focus on the specific knowledge that it is most important for pupils to retain. This includes some aspects of learning in early years.

Leaders provide teachers with access to high-quality training and networking opportunities. As a result, teachers have the subject knowledge they need in order to teach the curriculum. They use assessment daily to check that pupils remember what they have learned, spotting any gaps immediately. Typically, teachers select appropriate activities for pupils to complete in lessons. These tasks help pupils to practise applying the knowledge they are taught. However, this is less consistent in early years. On occasions, activities provided in Reception Year are not directly linked to the planned curriculum. Consequently, children do not have the chance to practise what they learn, and it is not secured in their memory.

Leaders have recently adopted a scheme to teach phonics. This is being used effectively to ensure that pupils learn this important knowledge in a systematic and progressive way from the moment they start school. Staff quickly spot if any pupil is at risk of falling behind, and effective support to catch up is provided. Pupils in the earliest stages of learning to read use books that match the sounds and words they know. This helps to build their confidence and ability to read fluently. Pupils enjoy the range of books they are exposed to at school. These include stories that explore different cultures and character backgrounds.

Appropriately specific support plans are in place across the school for pupils with SEND. Leaders work alongside staff to ensure that staff are confident to adapt their plans to make sure that pupils with SEND can access the same curriculum as others. Extra training is provided for staff where needed to help identify and meet pupils' individual needs. This enables pupils with SEND to learn and achieve alongside their friends in class.

Staff support pupils to develop their social skills. Individual pupils who need additional help are identified. They receive interventions from trained staff to help their confidence grow. As a result, pupils are being well prepared for the next stage of their education. Pupils value opportunities to take part in extracurricular activities. This includes a range of after-school clubs, including for art activities and sports. These promote key personal qualities, increasing pupils' independence and confidence.

All pupils contribute to the work of the whole-school council. As a result, they have all had an input into the new behaviour policy. This means that pupils have a clear understanding of how good behaviour contributes to a happy community. Pupils are typically very focused on their learning. Although not usual, where low-level disruption happens, teachers deal with it quickly and sensitively.

Governors are knowledgeable about the school's strengths and priorities for improvement. They make effective use of the detailed information provided by the headteacher. They use evidence from visits to check progress towards agreed goals and hold leaders to account. Leaders, including governors, are receptive to external guidance. They have made effective use of expert advice provided by improvement partners.

Leaders take a measured approach to improvements so that changes are lasting. The staff are united in a shared vision, of which they are proud to be a part.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders have established effective procedures to keep pupils safe. This includes a robust system for the completion of pre-employment vetting checks. Leaders maintain an accurate oversight of safeguarding concerns by keeping detailed records. Leaders respond to concerns in a timely manner, accessing external support if needed to keep pupils safe. All staff have had effective training to spot signs of potential abuse, in line with the most up-to-date guidance.

Pupils follow a curriculum that supports them with key knowledge to know how to keep themselves safe. This includes content about online safety and the importance of sharing their worries.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In some areas of the curriculum, including in the curriculum for early years, the knowledge set out in leaders' plans is not sufficiently precise. This leads to minor variations in the content that is taught and assessed by teachers. Leaders need to make sure that there is distinct clarity in the important knowledge and skills pupils need so that this is prioritised, laying a strong foundation for pupils' future learning in all areas of the curriculum.
- Learning activities in early years do not consistently focus on the opportunity for children to apply and practise the knowledge they are learning. This means that pupils in Year 1 have some gaps in the knowledge they need in order to access some tasks with ease. Leaders should ensure that children in the early years setting routinely access appropriately demanding activities that align closely with the intended curriculum.

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 February 2014.

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	117402
Local authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	10268670
Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	76
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing	Susie Howard
Headteacher	Laura Hale
Website	www.littlemunden.herts.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	13 December 2017, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The headteacher was appointed in September 2020.
- The school is a Church of England school in the Diocese of St Albans. As a school designated as having a religious character, it was subject to a separate section 48 inspection in January 2016 and was judged to be outstanding. The next section 48 inspection is due to take place within eight years of the previous inspection.
- The school provides a childcare provision before school, called the 'early start club,' which is managed by the governing body.
- The school does not currently use off-site alternative provision.

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 headteacher, the special educational needs coordinator and a range of other staff to explore provision across the school, including behaviour, curriculum, provision for pupils with SEND and early years.
- The lead inspector met with three representatives of the governing body, including the chair of governors. A separate meeting was held with an improvement partner from the local authority.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in early reading, mathematics and religious education. For each deep dive, inspectors met with subject leaders, looked at curriculum documentation, visited a sample of lessons, spoke with teachers, spoke with pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors met with the designated safeguarding leads, the school's business manager and other staff to discuss safeguarding.
- During the inspection, inspectors scrutinised a range of documentation, including the single central record of recruitment and vetting checks, curriculum plans, school development plans, and safeguarding and behaviour records.
- Inspectors also spoke with groups of pupils about their experiences of school life and their learning in lessons to understand what it is like to be a pupil in their school. Inspectors also observed the behaviour of pupils across the school site and considered 31 responses to the Ofsted pupil survey.
- Inspectors considered 30 responses to the online survey, Ofsted Parent View. Inspectors also considered 14 responses to Ofsted's staff survey.

Inspection team

Kristian Hewitt, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Michael Williams

His Majesty's Inspector

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