

Inspection of a good school: St Thomas of Canterbury Church of England Aided Junior School, Brentwood

Sawyers Hall Lane, Brentwood, Essex CM15 9BX

Inspection dates:

7 and 8 February 2023

Outcome

St Thomas of Canterbury Church of England Aided Junior School, Brentwood continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils enjoy attending this welcoming school. The school vision of 'realising the potential of every child' runs through everything that happens. Pupils work hard and want to achieve the best they can, so they reach the high expectations staff have of them.

Pupils behave well. In lessons, pupils listen carefully and are quick to settle to work. On the playground, pupils play well together. They include each other in games and help and support each other. Bullying is rare. When it does happen, staff deal with it. Pupils know there are trusted adults they can talk to if they are worried about something. The newly appointed pupil mental health ambassadors are also there to support pupils. Pupils are happy and safe at school.

There are many opportunities for pupils to take part in a range of different experiences outside the curriculum. These help provide pupils with many memorable moments and help pupils to learn more about the curriculum. For example, a residential trip to Wales helps pupils to learn more about their topic on rivers and gives them the chance to visit places they might not otherwise have the chance to.

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

Leaders have designed a curriculum that sets out the knowledge pupils need to learn. Teachers are skilled at working together to plan this knowledge out into a series of lessons. The curriculum is ambitious for all pupils. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) learn the same curriculum as their peers. Where changes are needed for pupils with SEND, the curriculum is adapted appropriately.

Leaders have placed a high priority on reading. Pupils experience a range of different types of books, including both non-fiction and fiction. They enjoy choosing books which

align to the school 'reading tree'. Pupils are motivated by the awards that go alongside reading these different books. Leaders have carefully chosen the stories that teachers read to pupils. These stories enhance pupils' wider development through exposing them to different cultures and themes. Leaders carefully identify pupils who find reading difficult. These pupils receive specific support to develop their fluency. Leaders precisely match the reading books pupils have to what pupils can read and sound out. This helps pupils to develop their confidence and their fluency.

Typically, teachers plan appropriate activities that help pupils learn effectively. They also use effective resources. This means, overall, pupils develop a secure understanding of the curriculum. For example, in mathematics, older pupils apply their knowledge from different areas of mathematics to help them solve problems in a variety of different contexts. However, in some instances staff do not give pupils the most effective support to learn the planned curriculum. In these cases, pupils complete and remember activities but do not learn and remember the intended knowledge.

There are a range of opportunities available for pupils to hold positions of responsibility. Democratically elected school councillors have an active voice in the school. They organise fundraising for chosen charities of the year, such as Great Ormond Street Hospital. Pupils also play an active role in the local community through the strong links the school has to the local church. The curriculum teaches pupils about respect and those who are different to them. Pupils are respectful of differences and show tolerance and understanding of each other.

Leaders, including those responsible for governance, support staff to manage their workload and well-being. Staff are proud to work at the school. They feel valued and supported by leaders and the wider staff team.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Staff understand how to spot the signs that a pupil may be at risk of harm. They are alert to potential safeguarding concerns. When staff have concerns, they record them consistently following the agreed procedures. Leaders ensure that they act appropriately and promptly on concerns raised. This includes seeking additional help from external professionals where required. The curriculum teaches pupils how to keep safe online. Pupils have a secure understanding of this. Leaders ensure that they complete and record all required checks on adults new to the school.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- There is some variation in the implementation of the planned curriculum. This means there are occasions where the activities pupils complete, and the support they receive, are not precisely matched to what leaders want pupils to learn. Leaders must ensure that they provide clear support and guidance to all staff so that the curriculum is

implemented consistently, and pupils develop a deeper understanding of what leaders want them to know and remember.

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 October 2012.

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	115179
Local authority	Essex
Inspection number	10255237
Type of school	Junior
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	7 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	308
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Father Mark North
Headteacher	Dean Moran
Website	www.stthomasjnr.org
Date of previous inspection	26 September 2017, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The headteacher took up post as the executive headteacher at the partner infant school in September 2022.
- The school's most recent inspection of its religious character under section 48 of the Education Act was in November 2017 and it will receive its next inspection within eight years of that date.
- The school currently makes use of one registered and one unregistered 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 his evaluation of the school.
- The inspector carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics and history. For each deep dive, he discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke with teachers, spoke with pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. The inspector also listened to pupils read with a

familiar member of staff. Curriculum plans and examples of pupil workbooks in geography and science were also considered.

- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspector scrutinised safeguarding policies, the school's record of background checks of adults at the school, and a sample of child protection files. He also spoke with governors, the designated safeguarding lead and staff about safeguarding practices at the school.
- The inspector held meetings with the headteacher, the special educational needs coordinator, subject leaders, staff, governors and pupils.
- The inspector reviewed a range of documents, including behaviour logs, bullying records, attendance records, pupil records, minutes of governing body meetings, school development plans and school policies.
- There were 72 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Ofsted Parent View, which were considered.
- The inspector considered 120 responses to Ofsted's questionnaire for pupils. He also spoke with pupils throughout the inspection to gather their views.
- There were 24 responses to Ofsted's questionnaire for school staff. The inspector also spoke with staff throughout the inspection to gather their views.

Inspection team

Michael Williams, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

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