

Inspection of Sir Robert Hitcham Church of England Voluntary Aided School

School Corner, Debenham, Stowmarket, Suffolk IP14 6PL

Inspection dates: 2 and 3 February 2023

Overall effectiveness **Good**

The quality of education **Good**

Behaviour and attitudes **Good**

Personal development **Good**

Leadership and management **Good**

Early years provision **Good**

Previous inspection grade Requires improvement

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils, and children in early years, are happy and safe. They love coming to school and seeing their friends and the adults who work with them. There is a strong sense of community spirit throughout the school. Pupils really value Celebration Collective Worship, where they can congratulate each other for their achievements and for embodying the school's Rainbow Pledges, which include 'striving to be the best we can be'.

Pupils enjoy their lessons. Teachers' high expectations provide pupils with the support and challenge they need to do well. These are established in early years and continue throughout school as pupils learn to be 'willing to make mistakes and learn from them'. Pupils appreciate the adults who help them to get better at their work.

Behaviour in lessons and social time is generally positive and pupils are warm and caring. Pupils' good conduct in class means they can work well without distractions. Sometimes, a minority of pupils need help to regulate their behaviour. Skilled adults provide this effective support. Bullying is rare, but pupils, parents and carers are confident that adults would quickly stop it if it were to happen.

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

Leaders have implemented an ambitious new curriculum across the school that is designed to challenge and support all pupils. The curriculum begins in early years and successfully prepares pupils for their next stage of education.

Through effective training, teachers have a good understanding of how to build on pupils' prior learning so they can continue to get better. Teachers are well supported by leaders to make teaching choices which develop pupils' understanding in all subjects. Leaders have focused on ensuring that adults are appropriately trained to make sure that pupils with SEND are able to progress well through the curriculum. In French, for example, pupils regularly practise the vocabulary that they have previously learned, as well as new vocabulary. This regular recall and continued practice ensures that pupils can remember what they have been taught in previous years and build on their learning with confidence.

In mathematics and early reading, assessment is well developed and used effectively to identify gaps in pupils' knowledge. From early years, teachers are skilled at adapting their teaching so that pupils learn and remember the curriculum. Pupils routinely practise their new learning in these subjects, which helps them to develop their fluency. In foundation subjects, assessment is less well embedded and teachers' identification of where pupils have gaps in their understanding is less consistent. This means that sometimes pupils' misunderstandings are not addressed before they move on to the next topic, and their knowledge is not as secure as it should be.

Leaders have prioritised reading. They ensure that pupils in the early stages of learning to read have the skills to enable them to decode and blend letters and sounds. This builds their confidence and enjoyment of reading. Staff are well trained to support children from early years to learn phonics and read with fluency. Children are proud to share what they have learned. They talk about what books they like. Pupils who struggle with reading are quickly identified and given appropriate support to catch up.

Since the previous graded inspection, the new leadership team has ensured that pupils' behaviour supports learning and contributes to a positive ethos in the school. Teachers deliver the curriculum effectively because pupils behave well. In a small number of cases, where some pupils struggle to manage their behaviour, staff are effective at supporting individuals so that learning can continue.

Leaders have ensured that a well-planned personal development programme meets the needs of pupils, so they are well prepared for life in modern Britain. Pupils learn about a range of important topics, such as managing money, spirituality and religion, and staying safe in society. They are able to discuss these themes thoughtfully and with interest. Due to the impact of COVID-19, pupils have had fewer opportunities for certain activities, such as visits and trips. This means they can lack confidence when discussing differences in society, such as race.

Leaders, including governors, have successfully addressed areas that were identified as needing development in the last inspection. Staff are well supported and proud to work at the school. Parents are very positive about their children's education.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders make sure that all staff are well trained and confident to report safeguarding concerns. The safeguarding team is robust in responding to these, quickly securing any help that a pupil may need. Recording is precise and timely. Adults who lead on safeguarding ensure that, over time, they continue to monitor pupils who have been raised as needing additional support.

Pupils learn how to be safe online and offline, and pupils talk with confidence about the trusted adult they can talk to.

Leaders carry out the appropriate checks on adults working in the school.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In the foundation subjects, the systems used for assessment do not consistently give leaders a clear understanding of what pupils know and understand. Gaps in pupils' knowledge or understanding are not always adequately addressed before teachers move on to a new topic. Leaders need to ensure that the system they use for identifying gaps is effective, and that teachers help pupils keep up.
- Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, and a new curriculum being implemented across the school, leaders have not developed a systematic enrichment programme. This means that pupils have fewer opportunities to develop their wider understanding about life in modern Britain. Leaders should create a coherent enrichment programme that provides a range of opportunities to enhance pupils' understanding of the curriculum and the wider world.

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	124774
Local authority	Suffolk
Inspection number	10255129
Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	158
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Naomi Faulds
Headteacher	Laura Dumolo
Website	www.sirroberthitcham.suffolk.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	27 May 2021, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- Since the previous graded inspection, the school has appointed a new headteacher.
- The school currently makes use of one unregistered alternative provider.
- The school has a Christian religious character. It was last inspected under section 48 of the Education Act 2005 in October 2016. The school's next section 48 inspection will be within eight school years.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

- Inspectors discussed any continued impact of the COVID-19 pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: mathematics, early reading, languages and science. For each deep dive, inspectors 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.

- Inspectors also looked at the early years curriculum and samples of pupils' books in geography.
- Inspectors visited a range of other lessons.
- The lead inspector met with staff responsible for the administration of the single central record of recruitment and vetting checks. The lead inspector met with the designated safeguarding lead to discuss the arrangements that are in place to safeguard pupils. The lead inspector scrutinised the school's safeguarding records and spoke to governors regarding safeguarding.
- Inspectors met with pupils to discuss their experience of school, including behaviour and bullying.
- An inspector met with leaders to discuss pupils' personal development and enrichment opportunities as well as behaviour and attendance.
- An inspector met with the school's special educational needs coordinator.
- Inspectors reviewed 45 pupil responses to Ofsted's online survey. Inspectors took account of 32 responses to Ofsted Parent View, Ofsted's online survey, including 30 free-text responses. Inspectors considered 21 responses to Ofsted's staff survey.

Inspection team

Bessie Owen, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Tim McLoughlin

Ofsted Inspector

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