

# Inspection of Laddingford St Mary's Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School

Darman Lane, Laddingford, Maidstone, Kent ME18 6BL

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Inspection dates: 7 and 8 March 2023

**Overall effectiveness** **Good**

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The quality of education **Good**

Behaviour and attitudes **Good**

Personal development **Good**

Leadership and management **Good**

Early years provision **Good**

Previous inspection grade Good

## **What is it like to attend this school?**

Pupils offer everyone warm smiles and a friendly welcome. The school offers a safe and nurturing environment, starting with 'chill time' every day. Pupils enjoy playing hockey, mastering craft skills and solving puzzles together.

Pupils meet high expectations for behaviour. Staff model how to be polite, respectful and kind, which inspires high standards for pupils. If pupils need help, staff use a 'restorative' approach. Pupils learn from mistakes and make amends. As a result, relationships stay positive and warm.

Pupils understand what bullying is and play their role in ensuring it does not happen. Pupils and parents have no concerns about bullying. They share faith in staff to always help with any worries.

Outdoor learning is embedded in school life. Pupils love cooking sausage stew and nettle soup over open fires, which they build themselves. Pupils learn to care for their environment and develop practical skills in the woodland area. Teachers see the resilience, teamwork and communication benefits of this in class.

Leaders are passionate that all pupils should experience a wealth of cultural opportunities. Highlights include a visit to watch the ballet at the Royal Opera House, residential activity trip and singing with other schools at a large arena. Pupils were enthralled by visitors who brought history to life through exciting drama activities.

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

Leaders and governors share their high ambition for every pupil to access a well-planned and inclusive curriculum. Staff work together to ensure that pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) achieve well. Leaders support staff to identify and manage SEND using clear communication and shared expertise. Classrooms are 'dyslexia friendly' and pupils with sensory issues are supported with resources, such as fiddle toys and ear defenders. A specialist 'nurture group' provides bespoke support to pupils, improving their communication and collaboration skills through enriching group activities, which match the breadth of the national curriculum.

In early years, children love role playing as the teacher, giving each other 'phonics lessons'. Children learn sounds quickly and securely. Reading and phonics are high priority, so all staff are well trained. Assessment is precise to ensure that gaps in pupils' knowledge are identified. Pupils catch up well with expert one-to-one help. Pupils learn to be fluent readers with a love for books. Teachers read to classes every day, selecting texts that bring variety, diversity and high levels of engagement.

Mathematics teaching is very successful, as reflected in pupils' progress and achievement. Teachers design tasks that help pupils to apply their skills to solve problems, using secure calculation strategies. Children in early years enjoy a rich offer of mathematical opportunities, practising number and counting skills using a range of well-planned resources. In history, pupils make connections between periods in the past. They wrote engaging newspaper reports about the Viking attack on Lindisfarne, recalling historical knowledge with adventurous language and a flair for writing. In early years, children practise storytelling to develop their skills, using creative language to describe events and characters.

The curriculum is sequenced effectively with clear knowledge and skills mapped across all subjects. Teachers collaborate well to share their strong subject knowledge. However, assessment is not fully developed across all areas of the curriculum. This means that teachers do not always know precisely what pupils know and remember in some subjects.

Behaviour is positive across the school. Children in early years show great engagement and sustained concentration. Sometimes, pupils need more reminders to focus when working independently. However, lessons are not disrupted, because pupils are respectful and listen well.

Attendance has been poor for some pupils since the pandemic. Leaders and governors are prioritising this, acknowledging that pupils must not miss learning time in school. While leaders' actions have been effective in improving attendance for many pupils, more work is needed to ensure high levels of attendance for all.

Pastoral care is a strength of the school, and pupils thrive when taking on a range of leadership opportunities. They are proud of roles including librarian, head student and prefect. Peer mediators are impressive; pupils say they always help them at playtime with any challenges. Staff show high levels of trust in pupils with important duties assisting the school office and leading assemblies. Pupils adore their rock music club. They are proud to represent the school in events, such as football tournaments for boys and girls. Leaders are reviewing extra-curricular opportunities, striving for better take-up by pupils.

Staff feel highly supported and trusted. They are positive and proud of their school. Governors fulfil their duties for equality and safeguarding. They ask questions, providing challenge and support for leaders. The headteacher leads by example, inspiring a culture that embraces all backgrounds with no barriers. Parents say this school makes pupils feel special, with everyone 'treated equally and utterly treasured'.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders have established rigorous safeguarding systems. The single central record is well maintained and monitored. Required checks are always undertaken and

recorded for staff, governors and volunteers. Leaders ensure that staff training is regularly updated. Everyone knows the procedures for identifying and reporting risks. Staff have full confidence in leaders to follow up concerns.

If families require extra support, leaders work with a range of external agencies, including social care, health and housing services. Communication is effective and actions show diligence.

Leaders have planned a curriculum which strengthens safeguarding for pupils. Pupils show a secure understanding of online safety and healthy relationships.

## **What does the school need to do to improve?**

### **(Information for the school and appropriate authority)**

- Assessment is not precise in all subjects. This means that teachers may not know exactly what pupils have learned and remembered in some areas of the curriculum. Teachers should ensure that efficient assessment systems are embedded to identify gaps in pupils' knowledge and understanding.
- The attendance of some pupils has been low since the pandemic. These pupils are missing out on learning time in school and may not achieve as well as they should. Leaders must extend their work to further improve attendance and reduce persistent absence.

## **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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	118637
<b>Local authority</b>	Kent
<b>Inspection number</b>	10242104
<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary controlled
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4 to 11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	80
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair of governing body</b>	Cheryl Johnson
<b>Headteacher</b>	Gemma Hitch
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.laddingford.kent.sch.uk">www.laddingford.kent.sch.uk</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	12 July 2017, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

## Information about this school

- The school is part of the Diocese of Rochester. The school was rated good in its most recent section 48 inspection, in June 2016.
- The school offers a breakfast club on site, led by school staff.
- The school currently uses no alternative provision.

## Information about this inspection

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

- Inspectors discussed the 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 early reading, mathematics and history. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to pupils, and looked at pupils' work.
- The lead inspector also looked at pupils' work in geography and English.

- The lead inspector listened to a range of pupils read.
- Inspectors observed catch up interventions to learn how staff provide extra support to pupils.
- Inspectors met with the headteacher, teachers, support staff and the special educational needs and/or disabilities coordinator.
- The lead inspector met five members of the governing body, including the chair of governors.
- To inspect safeguarding, inspectors studied documents and records, including the school's single central record and child protection referrals. Inspectors spoke with the designated safeguarding leader, staff, and pupils.
- Inspectors took account of the responses to the staff survey and spoke to a range of staff about their views of the school.
- Inspectors considered the responses to Ofsted's Parent View questionnaire and the additional free-text responses. Inspectors spoke with a range of parents about their views of the school.
- Inspectors took account of the responses to Ofsted's pupil questionnaire.
- Inspectors met with a range of pupils to discuss their views about the school and talked to pupils informally during social times and in lessons.
- The lead inspector met with a representative from the local authority.

### **Inspection team**

Scott Reece, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

David Harris

Ofsted Inspector

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