

# Inspection of a good school: St James' Church of England First School and Nursery, Alderholt

Park Lane, Alderholt, Fordingbridge, Hampshire SP6 3AJ

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Inspection date:

14 March 2023

## **Outcome**

St James' Church of England First School and Nursery, Alderholt continues to be a good school.

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

The school's key value of friendship is plain to see. Pupils are respectful and enjoy social times together. The 'friendship spot' helps pupils to find others to play alongside. Leaders work to ensure everyone is included.

Leaders and staff have high expectations for pupils' behaviour. Pupils are continually reminded of the school's mantra 'make great choices, be our best'. It helps them to develop self-control and to act responsibly. While pupils may fall out from time to time, this seldom develops into unkind behaviour. Pupils trust staff to resolve any issues quickly. Bullying is very rare.

Throughout the school, pupils learn and work together well. Children in the youngest classes enjoy the challenge of 'being invited to learn' and know how to use the many learning activities on offer. They play creatively and explore ideas with sustained interest. Older pupils listen to their teachers and concentrate well in lessons. They work hard. However, some pupils do not show as much pride in their presentation as they should.

Pupils know school values such as trust, peace, kindness and hope which reflect the Christian ethos of the school. Pupils' understanding and shared commitment to these values give them a strong sense of community.

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

Leaders are ambitious for all pupils. They are working hard to implement a curriculum that aims to prepare pupils well for the next stage of their education. The curriculum builds knowledge from the early years through to Year 4. Leaders work with other local schools to ensure the curriculum is aligned with the learning that takes place in upper key stage 2.

Leaders prioritise reading. The curriculum starts in the Nursery. Children build their awareness of sounds and learn simple phonics. Teachers deliver this learning in an age-appropriate manner that children enjoy. In Reception and key stage 1, teachers carefully introduce the sounds that pupils need to learn to read. Teaching is clear and precise. They use assessment to accurately match learning to pupils' current level of knowledge. Pupils practise and remember their learning. As a result, they develop fluency in their reading.

Leaders organise the curriculum for mathematics in a similar way to reading. The curriculum starts in the early years and learning is designed well to enable pupils to be ready for key stage 1. Teachers use assessment to accurately identify pupils' understanding. Leaders use this information to adapt the curriculum so that it is closely matched to the next steps each pupil needs to take.

Leaders think carefully about the learning needs of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) in English and mathematics. They consider the teaching approach that each pupil needs. In addition, for some pupils, leaders adapt the curriculum so that pupils focus on the most important content. For example, older pupils who are finding learning to read more difficult, spend more time concentrating on their decoding skills.

Leaders are developing the curriculums in the foundation subjects. These curriculums prioritise some aspects of knowledge that leaders want all pupils to know. However, in some subjects, important concepts are not included in this essential knowledge. Where this is the case, pupils do not build their knowledge as well as they could. In addition, subject leaders have not yet checked how effective the delivery of the curriculum is. They are unclear on what aspects need to be developed further. The use of assessment in these subjects is also at an early stage of development. Teachers do not know how well pupils remember the knowledge that has been taught. As a result, teachers do not have the information that they need to adapt learning and close any gaps in pupils' knowledge.

Pupils learn the importance of fundamental British values such as mutual respect and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs. They develop an understanding of the importance of democracy by electing the school council. The promotion of the school's values is developing pupils' moral understanding and helps them to learn 'right and wrong'. Pupils learn how to keep themselves safe and healthy in their daily lives. They can develop interests and talents through after-school activities, including street dance, forest schools and sports.

Governors work strategically to plan for the long-term future of the school. Leaders use advice and support from trust leaders to prioritise appropriate training for staff. All staff are proud to work at this school. Leaders support staff's well-being and promote effective teamwork.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Pupils are taught to understand healthy and unhealthy relationships and to stay safe online. The behaviour policy makes it clear that harassment is not tolerated. Pupils say that they all have an adult that they can talk to if they are worried.

Safeguarding leaders ensure that staff are appropriately trained and know the importance of following systems for reporting and monitoring concerns. Leaders know when to seek advice from external agencies and will escalate concerns if needed.

Governors and leaders ensure that all adults working in the school are suitable to work with children.

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

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

- Assessment is not yet effective in the foundation subjects. Teachers are unsure how well pupils remember the curriculum. As a result, learning is not adapted to close the gaps in pupils' knowledge. Leaders need to put in place effective assessment systems so that the most important curriculum content is learned and remembered by pupils.
- Middle leaders do not yet monitor the effectiveness of the curriculum to gain a sufficient overview of how well the curriculum is being implemented. Also, some important aspects of curriculum knowledge have not been identified. As a result, pupils do not build their knowledge as well as they could. Effective monitoring systems need to be put in place that enable middle leaders to understand the effectiveness of the curriculum and to make adaptations where necessary.

## **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 predecessor school, St James' Church of England First School, Alderholt, to be good in October 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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	142506
<b>Local authority</b>	Dorset
<b>Inspection number</b>	10268722
<b>Type of school</b>	First
<b>School category</b>	Academy converter
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	2 to 9
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	102
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	Board of trustees
<b>Chair of trust</b>	Nick Musselwhite
<b>Headteacher</b>	Jo Hudson
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.alderholt.dorset.sch.uk/">www.alderholt.dorset.sch.uk/</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	22 November 2017, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

## Information about this school

- This school is part of the Heath Academy Trust. It joined the trust in December 2015.
- The school runs a Nursery for children aged two to four years old.
- The school runs a breakfast club and after-school care.
- The school uses one registered 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 met with the headteacher, school leaders, other school staff, governors and trust leaders.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics and geography.
- 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 reviewed curriculum planning and pupils' work across other subjects in the curriculum.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour when arriving at school, in lessons and during breaktimes. Inspectors met senior leaders and staff to discuss the school's approach to behaviour management and how they respond to issues.
- Inspectors reviewed and sampled leaders' checks on the suitability of staff to work with children. They reviewed attendance information, behaviour records, support plans for pupils with SEND and safeguarding records.
- Inspectors considered responses to Ofsted Parent View and met with parents on the school playground.

### **Inspection team**

Gareth Simons, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

David New

Ofsted Inspector

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