

Inspection of a good school: St Botolph's Church of England Primary School

Dover Road, Northfleet, Gravesend, Kent DA11 9PL

Inspection dates:

28 and 29 March 2023

Outcome

St Botolph's Church of England Primary School continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

St Botolph's has a strong community ethos. Leaders have high expectations and want pupils to excel. In class, pupils are keen to contribute and work hard. This begins in the early years. It is here that children learn shared routines and develop an early love of learning. As a result, pupils achieve well across most of the curriculum.

Pupils know the 'Three Rs' of respect, responsibility and resilience well. They demonstrate these values in their conduct and interactions. They take great pride in being praised and all aspire to achieve the 'star level'. Pupils treat adults and each other with courtesy and demonstrate high levels of respect. Bullying is rare. Leaders are quick to act to ensure any incidents of unkindness are dealt with swiftly.

Pupils relish all the opportunities the school has to offer. Many participate in the range of clubs on offer such as 'busy fingers', musical theatre and dance. Pupils love attending forest school where they learn resilience as well as important safety skills.

Parents are fulsome in their praise for the school. One parent, summing up the views of many, described St Botolph's as a 'dedicated, inclusive school where my children are flourishing'.

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

Leaders are well informed about effective curriculum design. They have developed an ambitious and engaging programme that identifies the most important knowledge, skills and vocabulary that pupils need to learn and when. Children have a strong start in the well-structured early years. They experience a rich curriculum that gives them the necessary skills to prepare them for Year 1. Where the curriculum is fully embedded, such as in science, pupils make connections in their learning which deepen their understanding. In all subjects, leaders carefully track pupils' progress. This enables them to swiftly detect those requiring support, including accurately identifying those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND).

In the majority of curriculum areas, teachers' subject knowledge is secure. They provide pupils with activities designed to build their understanding over time. Teachers make skilful adaptations to these tasks for those pupils with additional needs, including SEND, to ensure they can successfully access the curriculum. Teachers use a range of strategies to check what pupils know, understand and remember. In mathematics, for example, pupils start each lesson with retrieval questions to ensure the knowledge sticks. The use of 'maths passports' is effective and ensures pupils' recall of number facts is secure. However, in a small number of subjects, where the curriculum is new, not all teachers are as confident. Consequently, they do not always plan activities that build on what pupils already know.

Leaders have rightly prioritised reading. This is promoted throughout the school day. During playtimes, pupils are keen to read in the outdoor 'book nook'. They also relish the opportunities to hear the stories read to them by their teachers. This widens their reading repertoire and fosters a love of reading. Early reading is taught well. This is because leaders have prioritised staff training. Pupils practise reading daily using books that match the sounds they know. Across all year groups, those pupils who are struggling to read get the help they need quickly. This ensures that pupils learn to read with fluency.

Pupils behave well. They have positive attitudes to their learning. Pupils' enthusiasm is evident in all lessons. Pupils demonstrate a deep understanding of respect and friendship and feel that everyone would be welcome at the school. They keenly celebrate diversity and proudly share their culture and home languages. Pupils value the opportunities to visit the local gurdwara and mosque as well as their linked church. They take an active role in their community and are especially proud to represent their school in a number of roles, such as the elected school council or as Makaton ambassadors supporting communication. Pupils are taught the importance of helping others. They raise funds for a range of charities, including Age UK, and help at the local foodbank. Parents value this work, with one stating that this 'helps build them into thoughtful and caring young people'.

Trust leaders and governors share leaders' ambition for all pupils. They are mindful of staff well-being and workload and offer a range of support to help leaders and staff. In turn, staff are highly appreciative of the training. They are a very committed team who are proud of their school.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Pupils have a strong knowledge of how to keep themselves safe, including online. They share any concerns they may have with known trusted adults or use 'worry monsters' located around the school.

Leaders maintain a strong safeguarding culture at the school. They provide ongoing training to ensure staff know what the signs of abuse are and what to do if they have any concerns. Leaders act quickly on these and work with external agencies to make sure

pupils and their families get the help they need. Leaders keep accurate records and complete audits that are checked by governors and the trust.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In a small number of curriculum subjects, teachers' subject knowledge is not secure. As a result, they do not always plan activities that help pupils build on their prior learning. Leaders need to ensure that all subjects are taught well, so that pupils learn effectively.

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 first ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be good in September 2017.

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	141579
Local authority	Kent
Inspection number	10242017
Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	423
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Mark Till
Headteacher	Amy Chitty
Website	www.st-botolphs.kent.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	13 and 14 September 2017, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school is part of the Aletheia Academies Trust.
- The school is part of the Diocese of Rochester. The last inspection of its religious character was in December 2016.
- The governing body manages before- and after-school childcare provision.
- The school does not currently use any 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 their evaluation of the school.
- The inspector met with the headteacher and other senior leaders. She also met with members of the governing body and representatives of the trust.
- The inspector carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics and history.

- For each deep dive, the inspector discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- During the inspection, the inspector met with a range of pupils to discuss their views about the school and talked to them informally during social times.
- To inspect safeguarding, the inspector scrutinised a wide range of information, including a selection of the school's records. The inspector spoke to staff and pupils about safeguarding and looked at how pupils learn to keep themselves safe. The inspector spoke to the safeguarding leader about the recording and reporting of safeguarding incidents.
- The inspector reviewed the responses to Ofsted's online survey, Ofsted Parent View. The inspector also took account of staff responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire.

Inspection team

Laura James, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

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