

Inspection of Walsham-le-Willows Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School

Wattisfield Road, Walsham-le-Willows, Bury St Edmunds, Suffolk IP31 3BD

Inspection dates: 28 and 29 March 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 Good

What is it like to attend this school?

Support from staff and peers ensures pupils feel valued and supported at this caring, welcoming school. Pupils learn from staff about how to treat others with kindness and understanding, so they can concentrate in lessons and play together harmoniously on the playground.

Pupils are safe at their school. They appreciate how adults encourage them to talk about any worries or fears. It means pupils receive support from adults when they need it most. Because pupils learn to be respectful and voice their concerns, bullying is rare. Staff help pupils to resolve any disagreements quickly.

Pupils live up to leaders' high expectations. Pupils benefit from a curriculum that typically allows them to develop the school values: discover, inspire and grow. For example, when learning French, younger pupils start off learning select words and phrases. By the time they reach Year 6, pupils can confidently hold a detailed conversation with each other.

Pupils enjoy voting on issues that will have a direct impact on their school community. They also like the many opportunities they have to learn about the things that they might do and explore when they are older. These include hearing from a visiting author about how he writes a book, creating a business with a small budget, and showing their handmade passports to visit and enjoy the cultures of different countries set up in a classroom.

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

Leaders have developed a well-structured and ambitious curriculum. In most subjects, leaders have made sure that they have clearly set out the information that pupils need to remember before moving on to the next stage of their learning. Teachers usually follow plans closely and ensure they are well taught to enable pupils to develop their understanding. Teachers are then able to assess the pupils accurately and ensure that any gaps in learning are addressed before moving on.

In some subjects, however, teachers do not use plans accurately. This means that the activities being taught and the assessment that follows do not always help pupils to build on their knowledge and skills over time.

Teachers support pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) well, using carefully thought out plans to adapt learning for them in class. Any pupils who fall behind are identified quickly and given additional resources or explanations to help them. This ensures that all pupils are able to access a full curriculum.

From the beginning of the early years, pupils learn reading skills through a well-taught, progressive approach to developing their phonics. They frequently practise by reading books to staff who are well trained in helping them to break down words

into familiar sounds. Pupils who require further support attend a 'decoding' group to ensure they catch up with other pupils of the same age. Older pupils choose freely from books closely matched to their ability. This means that by the time they leave school, almost all pupils can read fluently.

Leaders have prioritised pupils' personal development. Pupils learn about different cultures and family units and have a mature and intelligent understanding of them. They are motivated by opportunities to take on responsibilities, such as running the school library and setting up their own clubs. Leaders provide enriching experiences for pupils, including visits to local theatres, residential visits and projects involving the study of the history of the local area.

Pupils are extremely polite and friendly. Routines are established quickly in the early years and children are able to select independently from a range of learning activities. They initiate 'tidy-up time' themselves when a small bell is rung. All pupils engage positively with their learning in class. For example, when asked to work with different partners on a task, they will move calmly around the classroom. The playgrounds and corridors are calm and orderly.

Staff are positive about the training and support they receive from leaders. They feel that their workload is always considered when new initiatives are introduced.

Governors have a clear understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. They visit the school regularly to ensure safeguarding procedures are followed correctly and to check that school improvement work is having the desired impact. They work closely with school leaders on the ambitious plans they have for further school development.

Parents value the openness of the leaders, commenting especially on how well communication between home and school is managed.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Governors carefully oversee safer recruitment practices. Leaders keep their own and staff's training up to date. This helps them recognise and report pupils at risk of harm. Leaders act fast to make referrals to external agencies. Leaders tenaciously request specific support to safeguard vulnerable pupils. They also keep staff informed about how they follow up reported concerns. This assures staff that they and leaders do all they can to keep pupils safe. Pupils learn how to stay safe through the curriculum and wider school events. For example, in computing lessons, pupils learn the 'SMART rules', which they follow when using the internet.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Leaders have put in place clearly sequenced curriculum planning that teachers mostly follow to good effect. However, teachers occasionally deviate in ways that are unhelpful for pupils, arranging activities that are not best placed to help pupils secure the knowledge and skills that leaders want them to learn. Leaders should check that teachers understand the specifics set aside for them to teach, including how to use their assessment of what pupils know and can do to inform the activities they arrange for pupils to complete.

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	124717
Local authority	Suffolk
Inspection number	10255076
Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	128
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Jacqueline Ridding
Headteacher	Maxine McGarr
Website	www.walsham.suffolk.dbprimary.com/suffolk/primary/walsham
Date of previous inspection	18 October 2017, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- School leaders do not currently use any alternative provision.
- The school is in the Diocese of St Edmundsbury and Ipswich.
- The school has a religious character, Church of England, and was last inspected under section 48 of the Education Act 2005 on 14 June 2022. 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.

- 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, senior leaders and a range of staff. The lead inspector met with the chair of governors and one other governor. He also had a phone call with a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in early reading, mathematics, geography and French. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to pupils about their learning and personal development and looked at samples of pupils' work. The lead inspector listened to a sample of pupils in Years 1, 2 and 3 read to a familiar adult.
- Inspectors met with teaching staff and looked more widely at curriculum documentation for history and personal, social and health education.
- The lead inspector reviewed the school's safeguarding documentation, including safeguarding checks carried out on adults working and volunteering at the school. Inspectors talked to governors, staff and pupils about how the school keeps everyone safe.
- To gather pupils' views, inspectors observed pupils in lessons and at breaktimes. Also, inspectors held discussions with groups of pupils. There were no responses to Ofsted's pupil survey.
- To gather staff's views, inspectors held discussions with several members of staff. Inspectors also took account of the 17 responses to Ofsted's staff survey.
- To gather parents' views, inspectors took account of the 25 responses, including 16 free-text responses, to the online survey, Ofsted Parent View.

Inspection team

Michael Thomas, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Jo Nutbeam

Ofsted Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
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