

Inspection of Thundridge Church of England Primary School

Ermine Street, Thundridge, Ware, Hertfordshire SG12 0SY

Inspection dates: 13 and 14 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?

Pupils are proud of their school. They speak enthusiastically about all aspects of their learning. Pupils value the warm culture at the school. They appreciate the inclusive, accepting environment. Staff know pupils well. Pupils feel safe because they are cared for well.

Pupils enjoy the opportunities afforded to them by the school's federation with another local school. These include participating in football tournaments and residential trips. Pupils regularly undertake community projects, such as growing plants for local flowerbeds.

Teachers have high expectations of pupils. Pupils rise to the challenges their teachers set them. In most subjects, pupils produce work of a good standard. They enjoy discussing moral issues in class.

Pupils behave well in class and around the school site. Classrooms are purposeful, and low-level disruption is rare.

Leaders place a high priority on pupils' well-being, and staff put pupils first. Pupils benefit from strong relationships with adults in the school, who they trust to look after them. Bullying is rare. Staff take swift action to address any unkindness when it does occur. Pupils learn about positive relationships and enjoy close friendships with their peers. Pupils enjoy playing together.

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

Leaders have developed an ambitious and well-thought-out curriculum. Learning is sequenced from the early years to Year 6. In most subjects, leaders have organised the curriculum in a way which ensures that pupils are building their knowledge over time. Regular checks by teachers ensure that pupils understand new concepts. This work is having a positive impact on pupils' learning. Leaders have adjusted the early reading and mathematics curriculums to ensure that pupils have engaging resources. In some foundation subjects, the curriculum is not as well developed and needs further adaptation to ensure all pupils can make progress. Teachers do not assess pupils' progress as well as they should to be able to ensure that work has appropriate challenge for all pupils.

Leaders have made sure that the teaching of phonics is a high priority. They have ensured that staff have the training and resources they need to teach phonics well. Pupils engage well with the new phonics approach. They get sufficient practise to improve their ability to read. Leaders and teachers, including in the early years, help parents to support their children with reading at home. Pupils are supported to catch up if they fall behind. Pupils learn to read fluently.

Reading and a love of literature are important at the school. Leaders have selected a wide variety of suitable texts to enhance teaching across the curriculum. Many pupils love reading and enjoy selecting books from the school's library.

There is a wealth of carefully planned activities available to children in the early years. Leaders prioritise the development of language. Adults skilfully support pupils' communication skills. Pupils readily participate in discussions with staff and their peers, taking turns and listening carefully to adults. They take part in activities that develop their grasp of letters and numbers. Pupils develop a curiosity about the world through stimulating activities, which encourages them to think, collaborate and solve problems.

Leaders have made some changes to practices to reflect the school's inclusive culture. This includes a new positive behaviour management approach. The positive approach has not been fully shared with all staff and parents. Consequently, stakeholders are unaware of the reasons for these changes. The new policy ensures that pupils learn to take responsibility for their behaviour and learning. It is having a positive impact. Pupils listen carefully in lessons. They follow instructions quickly. Pupils get along well during social times.

Pupils' personal and spiritual development is at the core of the school's work. Staff support pupils to be responsible citizens. They give pupils opportunities to get involved in community projects. Pupils learn about equality and diversity and the importance of living healthy lifestyles. Pupils access age-appropriate relationships, sex and health education. They learn what is needed to have positive relationships.

Leaders usually provide effective support to pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Teachers work collaboratively with parents to produce detailed plans to meet the needs of pupils. Staff are well trained to deliver effective interventions to help pupils to catch up. The majority of pupils with SEND successfully learn the same curriculum as their peers. For a small number of pupils with more complex needs, leaders and teachers do not adapt the curriculum as effectively as they should. As a result, a small number of pupils with SEND do not make as much progress as they could.

Governors are clear about the school's strengths and priorities for improvement. They monitor the effectiveness of the curriculum and how well pupils achieve. Governors also hold leaders to account for the workload and well-being of staff. They take a proactive role in building successful relationships with stakeholders and know the community well.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders take their responsibilities for safeguarding seriously. Records are thorough and detailed. Referrals are made to outside agencies, when needed, but leaders also

work diligently to improve the provision for pupils within school. Leaders construct detailed plans for pupils facing challenging situations, and staff follow these closely.

Staff are well trained to identify risks to pupils. They know how to pass concerns on to leaders. Pupils are taught how to keep themselves and others safe.

Governors ensure that safeguarding procedures are properly followed. There is a strong culture of safeguarding in the school.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Assessment processes in some foundation subjects are underdeveloped. Teachers do not have the information they need to adapt the curriculum to ensure all pupils build on the knowledge they already have. Leaders need to ensure that there are effective assessment processes in place across all aspects of the curriculum so that teaching can build on prior learning.
- The curriculum is not always sufficiently well adapted to meet the needs of pupils with SEND. This means that some pupils do not make as much progress as they could. Teachers need to ensure they adapt the curriculum to meet the needs of all pupils.
- A small number of stakeholders express concern about changes made by leaders. This presents challenges when embedding new policies. As a result, not all support the changes. Leaders need to take steps to ensure that the reason for policy changes is understood by all stakeholders.

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	117408
Local authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	10255080
Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	67
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Kathy Dunnett
Headteacher	Sarah Bridgman
Website	http://www.thundridge.herts.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	17 October 2017, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The executive headteacher has been in post since April 2022. Prior to this appointment, there was a period of temporary postholders.
- The school has been part of the Thundridge and Tonwell St Mary's Church Schools Federation since April 2022.
- This is a Church of England voluntary controlled school. The school's last section 48 inspection under the Education Act 2005 for schools of a religious character was conducted in March 2018. The school's next section 48 inspection will be within eight school years.
- The school does not currently use any alternative provision.

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 executive headteacher, deputy headteacher, early years leader, an improvement partner from the local authority, the chair and vice chair of governors and four other governors.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics and art and design. 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 a range of curriculum documents and pupils' work from a range of other subjects.
- To check on safeguarding, inspectors reviewed the school's single central record of recruitment and vetting checks, met with the designated safeguarding lead, executive headteacher and vice chair of governors. They reviewed the safeguarding policy, monitoring reports and pupil records, as well as speaking to staff and pupils about safeguarding processes in the school.
- Inspectors took account of the 29 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Ofsted Parent View, including 19 free-text comments. They also considered 22 pupil survey responses and 12 staff survey responses.

Inspection team

Sarah Fowler, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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