

Inspection of St Ippolyts Church of England Aided Primary School

Ashbrook Lane, Hitchin, Hertfordshire SG4 7PB

Inspection dates: 25 and 26 April 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 at St Ippolyts learn and play as part of a united community. They learn about the world through an interesting curriculum from the moment they start school in early years. Pupils know that the adults around them are helping them to achieve well, at every step of the way.

The high profile of values throughout the school helps pupils to become thoughtful and kind. School values, such as respect and love, are seen through the actions that pupils take. This has a positive impact on behaviour around the school. Pupils are considerate of others, including when playing in mixed-age groups. Reports of poor behaviour, such as bullying, are very rare. However, pupils know that adults are quick to address unkindness. As a result, pupils are happy and safe.

Wider enrichment opportunities form a core part of pupils' learning. This includes the chance to compete and work as a team in local sporting competitions. When reflecting on their time in school, pupils frequently describe the adults around them as role models, who lead by example. This results in highly respectful relationships between pupils and staff. Pupils experience compassion and nurture from the adults in school. Pupils and their parents value this highly.

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

Leaders and governors work collaboratively to provide pupils with an engaging education. This is achieved through an ambitious curriculum, which is designed to prepare pupils well for the future. In addition, there are daily opportunities for pupils to develop their personal qualities and character. As a result, pupils are supported to achieve well, both academically and socially.

Curriculum plans support pupils to gain secure knowledge, from the early years. Typically, these plans are precise and set out the order in which concepts should be taught. This is demonstrated well in the art and design curriculum, where pupils develop artistic skills in carefully designed stages. In a few foundation subjects, leaders' plans are not as explicit about some of the content that should be taught. In these subjects, the effectiveness of learning can vary, as teachers do not consistently focus on the most important knowledge.

Leaders have provided effective staff training and development. This means teachers and support staff have the secure knowledge needed to teach the curriculum. Teachers routinely check that pupils learn the knowledge they have been taught. They revisit concepts that need extra practice.

Staff have the expertise needed to adapt learning for pupils with additional barriers to learning. This includes pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). The needs of pupils with SEND are effectively identified. This leads to targeted and impactful support. Routines are in place to review pupils' SEND plans regularly. However, on occasion, targets set for pupils are not specific and therefore

not consistently effective. Leaders are taking effective action to rectify this. Typically, staff working with pupils are ensuring those with SEND achieve well alongside their peers in class.

Leaders' chosen approach to teach phonics is helping pupils to learn to read. The youngest pupils receive good-quality practice with the sounds they need to know. Pupils apply this knowledge accurately when reading books. Books chosen for pupils are well matched to their current stage and help them read fluently. Pupils enjoy learning to read. They put this important skill into practice as they grow and learn through the school.

Leaders provide enrichment opportunities that benefit pupils' personal development. Through lessons, assemblies and trips, pupils learn to accept and embrace others' differences. Pupils also get the chance to contribute to a range of leadership roles. These include sports ambassadors and the chance to become a Year 6 'buddy'. This gives pupils the chance to make a positive difference in their school community.

Adults in school reinforce high expectations for pupils' behaviour. They do this through regular praise and celebration of pupils' achievement. Pupils are also excited to be offered the chance to sit in the 'golden chair' in assemblies. The positive approach contributes strongly to the good behaviour seen in classrooms. Across the school site, pupils are very polite and well-mannered.

Leaders' commitment to the education of pupils is infectious. Staff in the school are proud to work here, and demonstrate the same high ambitions for pupils.

The strong ethos of the school is reflected in the reliable work of the governors. They have a secure understanding of their responsibilities. Governors use their established expertise to hold leaders to account for ongoing improvements.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders and staff work effectively together to maintain a strong safeguarding culture. This work is underpinned by strong staff knowledge and robust routines to record and share concerns.

Leaders engage with parents effectively to help support pupils to stay safe. They act in the best interests of pupils, seeking the support of professional services as needed. Leaders have completed all mandatory checks on staff employed in the school.

Pupils are taught specific strategies to keep them safe online, which they remember and put into practice. There is also a sharp focus on pupils' learning about mental health and personal safety.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In a few foundation subjects, leaders have not provided sufficient clarification about what pupils must know. This leaves teachers some room for interpretation, and sometimes lessons vary in the specific content pupils are taught. As a result, pupils do not always learn what leaders intend. Leaders should ensure that all curriculum plans are explicit about what knowledge should be taught, and when. This will ensure that pupils have the secure knowledge they need for future learning in all areas of the curriculum.

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	117440
Local authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	10287102
Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	5 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	169
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Elizabeth Luxton
Headteacher	Rachel Peddie
Website	www.stipps.herts.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	1 February 2018, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school is a Church of England school in the Diocese of St Albans. As a school designated as having a religious character, it was subject to a separate section 48 inspection in October 2021 and was judged to be excellent. The next section 48 inspection is due to take place within approximately five years.
- The school offers a childcare provision before school, called 'Early Birds', which is managed by the governing body.
- The school does not currently use off-site 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 held meetings with the headteacher, the inclusion manager and a range of other staff to explore provision across the school, including behaviour, curriculum, provision for SEND and early years.
- The lead inspector met with six representatives of the governing body, including the chair of governors. A separate meeting was held with an improvement partner from the local authority.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics, history and art and design. For each deep dive, inspectors met with subject leaders, looked at curriculum documentation, visited a sample of lessons, spoke with teachers, spoke with pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors met with the designated safeguarding lead and other staff to discuss safeguarding.
- During the inspection, inspectors scrutinised a range of documentation, including the single central record of recruitment and vetting checks, curriculum plans, school development plans, and safeguarding and behaviour records.
- Inspectors also spoke with groups of pupils about their experiences of school life and their learning in lessons to understand what it is like to be a pupil in their school. Inspectors also observed the behaviour of pupils across the school site and considered 108 responses to the Ofsted pupil survey.
- Inspectors reviewed 71 responses to Ofsted's online survey, Ofsted Parent View, and parents' free-text comments. Inspectors also considered 16 responses to Ofsted's staff survey.

Inspection team

Kristian Hewitt, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Steve Mellors

His Majesty's Inspector

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