

Inspection of a good school: Acton Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School

Lambert Drive, Acton, Sudbury, Suffolk CO10 0US

Inspection dates:

19 and 20 April 2023

Outcome

Acton Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Acton pupils are proud of their school. This shines through in their welcome to visitors and in their eagerness to explain their learning. Pupils understand the school motto, 'strive, support, succeed'. They know how this contributes to their progress and to school life. Pupils are kind to each other. They feel safe in school and trust adults to deal with any concerns. Bullying is rare.

Pupils try hard because leaders want them to do their best. Those pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) achieve well alongside their peers. Most pupils enjoy reading. They like talking about the interesting stories shared in lessons. Children in the early stages of learning to read get help to catch up if they fall behind. The support for some older pupils who need to improve their reading is not always as precise in ensuring that they catch up quickly.

Pupils are taught the principles of good behaviour. They respond well to leaders' high expectations. Early years children settle into well-established routines. Positive relationships are at the heart of the school community.

Pupils' leadership roles, such as 'faith councillors,' are valued. Carefully thought-out trips enrich the curriculum, deepen pupils' learning and contribute well to their wider development.

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

Leaders and governors have established a broad and interesting curriculum. Relationships with parents and families are strong and effective. This is a significant aspect of leaders' work, which makes a positive difference to pupils' achievement.

The curriculum is planned carefully to allow new knowledge and skills to build securely on what pupils already know. Learning is structured so that pupils revisit what they have previously been taught. This helps them to apply what they know to new ideas.

Staff mostly check effectively to ensure that gaps in pupils' learning are addressed quickly. However, occasionally, starter activities and some informal checks on learning are not matched well enough to leaders' intentions. This is because the tasks set are not always precise enough in ensuring that pupils remember important content before they move on to the next stage. When this happens, time is wasted, and some pupils do not learn as much or as well as they could.

Leaders have prioritised reading and acted to ensure that pupils become confident readers. The revised phonics scheme has improved the rate at which children in the early years and pupils in Year 1 gain accuracy and fluency in their reading. The books they read are closely matched to the sounds that they know. Most pupils who need to catch up with their reading are helped to improve. Interventions for some older pupils, however, are not as sharply focused as they could be on addressing gaps in their phonics knowledge and skills. As a result, a few pupils do not improve their reading ability as quickly as they could, which impacts negatively on their writing and spelling.

Pupils with SEND get the help that they need to learn together with other pupils and to achieve well. They are supported to access the curriculum through careful adaptations. These reflect the same high ambition as for other pupils, but sometimes with smaller steps in learning as appropriate to individual needs. Leaders support staff effectively to make any necessary changes. This contributes towards pupils with SEND achieving well.

Pupils behave well. The principles of good behaviour are widely taught and promoted effectively. Staff use consistent language to reinforce their high expectations. Consequently, pupils understand the boundaries and how good behaviour makes a difference to their learning. Targeted support helps all pupils to interpret their own moods and feelings, so they know what to do to avoid getting angry or upset.

Wider educational experiences, such as visits to Colchester Castle and the Suffolk Show, enrich pupils' learning. Pupils are taught to be compassionate and kind through the faith-based values at the heart of the curriculum. They understand the importance of respecting individual differences, equality and diversity. The personal, social and health education curriculum, high-quality story books and well-focused assemblies combine effectively to ensure that this is the case.

Leaders have an accurate understanding of what the school does well and what it needs to improve. Governors are regular visitors to the school. Further training is ensuring that all governors have the skills they need to challenge leaders to continue to improve the provision.

Staff value leaders' 'open-door' policy and the consideration given to their well-being. The parents who shared their views during the inspection were overwhelmingly positive about the work of leaders and the wider school team.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders and governors understand their responsibility to keep pupils safe. Consequently, they make sure that staff are trained well to address any concerns quickly. Pupils are taught how to manage risks, including when they are playing games online.

Safeguarding records are detailed and closely monitored. Leaders' checks ensure that pupils and families get help when they need it, including from external agencies. Effective safer recruitment practices confirm the appropriateness of new staff to work with children before they join the school. The mental health and well-being of pupils and staff is a priority.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The curriculum in a few aspects is still developing. Starter activities and some informal checks on learning are not always precise enough in revisiting the important content that pupils need to know. Where this happens, time is wasted, and a few pupils do not make as much progress they could. Leaders should ensure that all activities and assessments are matched carefully to the key knowledge and skills that pupils need to remember to build new learning effectively at the next stage.
- Interventions for a few older pupils who need to catch up with their reading are not always sharply focused on addressing gaps in their phonics knowledge and skills. This means that these pupils do not improve their reading and writing fluency as quickly as they could. Leaders should ensure that reading support for older pupils is informed systematically by any phonics learning needs, so that all pupils achieve consistently and well.

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 November 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	124686
Local authority	Suffolk
Inspection number	10268566
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	166
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	John Barry Moulton
Headteacher	Jonathan Gray
Website	www.acton.suffolk.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	7 and 8 November 2017, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school is part of the Diocese of Saint Edmundsbury and Ipswich.
- The school is smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- The headteacher, who previously held the deputy headteacher and acting headteacher roles in the school, was appointed in September 2020.
- The school's religious character was last inspected in March 2016. The school's next religious character inspection will be within eight school years.

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 conducted deep dives in the following subjects: early reading, mathematics and history.

- For each deep dive, the inspector discussed the curriculum with senior leaders and subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, and spoke with teachers and other adults. She also spoke with pupils about their learning and looked at their work.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspector checked safeguarding policies, the school's record of pre-employment checks on new staff and a sample of child protection files. She also spoke with governors, the designated safeguarding leads and other staff about safeguarding practices at the school.
- Additional meetings were held with the chair of governors and three other governors, the head of school, the special educational needs coordinator and specialist leaders from the trust.
- A range of documents were checked, including behaviour logs, attendance records and school policies.
- There were 37 responses to the online questionnaire, Ofsted Parent View, which were considered alongside 37 free-text responses from parents. The inspector also spoke with some parents as they dropped their children off at the school.
- There were 30 responses to Ofsted's questionnaire for school pupils. The lead inspector spoke with individuals and groups of pupils during the inspection to hear about their school experiences.
- There were 17 responses to Ofsted's questionnaire for school staff. These were considered alongside the inspector's discussions with staff throughout the inspection to gather their views.

Inspection team

Christine Dick, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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