

Inspection of St Botolph's Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School

Back Hills, Botesdale, Nr Diss, Suffolk IP22 1DW

Inspection dates: 17 and 18 May 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 generous and kind. They warmly welcome any newcomers, living out the phrase 'the more, the merrier' when it comes to making friends. Pupils themselves identify this, referring to the messages they learn from leaders and staff about being respectful. Learning these messages means pupils are unfazed when discussing or meeting those who differ to them. It means pupils are happy at this school.

Because pupils have high expectations for their own and others' conduct, they spot and report bullying straight away. Starting an 'anti-bullying log' helps to gather the evidence that informs the support the perpetrator and victim receive. It then puts a stop to the bullying. Having leaders and staff who resolve their worries means pupils remain safe.

Be it with reading or the other subjects, pupils achieve well. They are keen to share what they know, such as recalling multiplication facts or explaining how families differ.

Charitable actions are the norm. For example, pupils volunteer as 'monitors' around school to look after equipment or to litter pick in the local area. The school council serves as a vehicle for change. It takes pupils' ideas and makes them a reality, such as by introducing extra-curricular clubs based on pupils' requests.

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

Leaders bring out the best in pupils and staff. Considered arrangements ensure teachers have a manageable workload. For instance, having administrative staff arranging school trips allows teachers to focus on preparing lessons and supporting pupils. Because of how leaders look after them, staff help each other. Pupils in turn model the same friendly, cooperative behaviour. It creates a happy place in which to work and learn.

School governance is a strength. Having committed governors means school leaders receive effective challenge and praise that ensures they do their job well.

Leaders rightly prioritise reading. Revising the phonics programme worked wonders. Staff clearly explain the sounds letters make. Frequent opportunities for revision help pupils to know these well. It shows, for example, in the Reception Year, where children confidently blend the sounds that letters make to read words. Sharp use of assessment results in effective support for those pupils needing it. Being able to read the books they receive encourages pupils to love reading. The 'bedtime boxes' younger pupils receive set up the habit of reading regularly at home. This then serves pupils well with reading more widely as they move through the school. Extra events, such as visits from a storyteller, further instil a love of reading in pupils.

For the most part, the school's curriculum is suitably clear, detailing what pupils learn and when. For example, in mathematics, frequent opportunities to revisit what pupils previously learned before introducing new concepts means pupils are typically confident mathematicians. Teachers' use of assessment, such as pre- and post-unit tests, allows them to check what pupils know, which informs teaching. Dedicated teaching assistants have the know-how to reteach concepts to those pupils who need the extra help.

There remain a few subjects that lack the strengths of others. In these subjects, teachers are unclear about the specifics they should teach. This means they may repeat content without building on it, or introduce pupils to concepts that go beyond the scope of what they should learn. It hinders pupils developing the depth of knowledge they have in other subjects.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities typically thrive. This is where leaders guide teachers to work with parents to specify suitable support in the 'learning passports'. For the most part, these plans balance academic and pastoral targets suitably. Pupils then receive extra help, such as resources to give them ideas for starting sentences or extra time to work in a group to facilitate making friends.

The way in which leaders and staff cater for pupils' personal development works wonderfully. Pupils and parents alike value the ample extra-curricular offer. It includes a pleasing range of clubs and inter-school competitions. These allow pupils to mix and mingle with peers. It shows in pupils typically being charismatic and confident in social situations.

Most pupils attend school regularly. However, there are pupils who miss too much school. These pupils tend to be those from disadvantaged backgrounds. Leaders have been reluctant to challenge parents, choosing to offer support instead. The support alone is not resolving issues fast enough. Time away from school means these pupils miss valuable learning. Some of these pupils also lack confidence, seeing that other pupils know and can do things they find hard.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Checks on staff and volunteers occur before they work in the school to ensure pupils are around safe adults.

Leaders, including governors, and staff receive training that ensures they understand the ways to spot and report pupils at risk of harm. Where leaders are approachable, it encourages a culture whereby staff and pupils pass on concerns. This allows leaders to investigate appropriately, liaising with external agencies to arrange suitable help.

Pupils learn helpful guidance from staff about how to stay safe, including online. For example, pupils know what to do if they receive unkind or unsuitable messages.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Leaders have yet to complete their curriculum review. Consequently, what pupils learn each year in a few subjects lacks clarity. In these subjects, it is harder for teachers to plan lessons that review and add to what pupils should know. Leaders should specify the words, concepts and skills they want pupils to learn in these subjects, sharing these clearly with teachers.
- Too much time can pass before leaders take action to address a pupil's poor attendance. Consequently, some disadvantaged pupils are persistently absent. Being absent leads to gaps in pupils' knowledge of the curriculum and so hinders their achievement. Leaders should ensure a rigorous system for identifying and addressing attendance concerns, including a consistent approach for helping pupils to catch up with learning lost due to absence.

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	124758
Local authority	Suffolk
Inspection number	10255092
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	176
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Susan Wright
Headteacher	Mark Cobbold
Website	www.stbotolphs.suffolk.dbprimary.com
Date of previous inspection	29 November 2017, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school is part of 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 20 January 2023. The school's next section 48 inspection will take place in approximately five school years.
- There is before- and after-school childcare for pupils who attend the school. It is run by a separately registered and inspected childcare provider.
- School leaders do not currently use alternative provision for any pupils.

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 leaders, including the headteacher, deputy headteacher, special educational needs coordinator, five governors and a representative working on behalf of the local authority.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics and geography. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to staff, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. The lead inspector also listened to a sample of pupils read to a familiar adult.
- To further inspect the curriculum, the team inspector met with leaders to review curriculum documentation for religious education and personal, social and health education. The team inspector also looked at a sample of pupils' work and held a discussion with pupils about these subjects.
- To inspect safeguarding, the lead inspector met with the designated safeguarding lead to review safeguarding records and to scrutinise the single central record of recruitment and vetting checks. To further evaluate safeguarding, inspectors also spoke to governors, staff, pupils and parents, and reviewed surveys.
- Inspectors reviewed a range of other school documentation and policies, including minutes of governors' meetings and the school development plan.
- To gather pupils' views, inspectors spent time observing and speaking to pupils. Inspectors also took account of the 65 responses to Ofsted's pupil survey.
- To gather parents' views, inspectors reviewed the 42 responses and 34 free-text responses submitted to the online survey, Ofsted Parent View. The team inspector also spoke to some parents at the start of a school day.
- To gather staff's views, inspectors spoke to several staff and reviewed the 22 responses to Ofsted's staff survey.

Inspection team

Daniel Short, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Ryan Freeman

Ofsted Inspector

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