

Inspection of St Mary's Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School, Hatfield Broad Oak

Hatfield Broad Oak, Bishop's Stortford, Hertfordshire CM22 7HH

Inspection dates: 21 and 22 June 2023

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

The quality of education

Requires improvement

Behaviour and attitudes

Requires improvement

Personal development

Good

Leadership and management

Requires improvement

Early years provision

Good

Previous inspection grade

Good

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils enjoy coming to school and are typically happy. They are positive about how things have improved in the last year.

Pupils like that teachers are now more consistent with managing behaviour. However, they find it frustrating that some pupils still disrupt learning repeatedly. This is not the case for children in early years, where everyone behaves well.

Pupils learn to read with confidence and enjoy mathematics, in which they develop a secure understanding. Pupils get a mixed experience of learning in other subjects and are not supported to build their knowledge well enough. Children in early years enjoy interesting and engaging provision and develop well in all key areas of learning.

Older pupils build caring relationships with younger pupils by taking on buddy roles. This helps pupils to feel safe in the playground. Pupils learn about how to make decisions based on good morals. Most pupils apply this to how they treat each other, which is with tolerance and respect. Pupils trust adults to listen, and this also helps them to feel safe.

Pupils stay active through sports clubs, such as tennis. They develop teamwork and cultural understanding through events such as the leavers' production of 'A Midsummer Night's Dream'.

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

Since the last inspection, the quality of education pupils receive has declined. Governors recognise this and have sought support from the local authority and diocese. Actions have been taken to strengthen leadership. An interim executive board has been established to support governors, and an executive headteacher has been appointed. Between the present and previous inspection, improvements have been made to priority areas. However, governors have not challenged with enough rigour to establish an accurate view of some areas, such as behaviour.

Leaders have ensured that there is now a consistent approach to the teaching of early reading. This begins from the start of early years. Staff teach phonics effectively and support pupils to read with fluency and confidence. Teachers ensure that pupils read regularly and develop a love of reading. Older pupils read regularly, but they do not get enough opportunities to develop their comprehension ability.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) have their needs identified effectively. Most pupils get effective support so they can access the curriculum and achieve as well as their peers. However, a small number of pupils with SEND still struggle to manage their emotions, as the support leaders have put in place to help meet their needs is relatively new.

In some subjects, teachers have the knowledge and expertise to enable pupils to follow the intended curriculum well. In these subjects, teachers check what pupils know and tailor learning accordingly. However, this is not the case in many subjects, as teachers have not had the training they need. This means that staff do not plan to build on what pupils have learned before as effectively as they should, nor do they deliver the planned curriculum well enough. Consequently, some pupils have gaps in their knowledge or cannot retain or apply knowledge well enough.

Children in the early years engage in high-quality discussions. Teachers ensure that children with SEND are included. As a result, children with SEND confidently express themselves and fully engage with learning. Children learn in an interesting and stimulating environment. They share and include each other in their play. Pupils join in with planned activities enthusiastically. Teachers skilfully support children so that they make the most of learning opportunities.

Leaders have trained staff in a new behaviour policy, which has resulted in pupils feeling that behaviour is dealt with more consistently and fairly. Leaders have started to provide support for pupils so they can make more positive choices and understand how their actions impact on others. However, this is a work in progress, and some pupils still disrupt learning more regularly than they should.

Pupils receive a broad range of wider experiences. 'Gardening with grandma' and volunteers club are very popular, and pupils care for the plants with pride. Pupils enjoy trips and visits that support their learning in each class. For example, younger children recently went to Stanstead Airport to understand the world around them. Pupils learn about different faiths and cultures. This is reflected in the tolerant attitudes of the vast majority of pupils. Leaders have established a caring ethos at the school. This is celebrated each week through the 'kindness cup'.

Leaders have established stronger relationships with parents and members of the community, who recently came together to run stalls as part of the local '10k race'. Leaders are working to engage and listen to staff. Most staff are supportive and positive about how workload and well-being are considered. Governors are not overly reliant on external support but need further training and guidance so that they can carry out their role consistently well.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders have ensured that the culture of the school takes into account pupils' voices. Pupils feel safe and confident to report any worries or concerns.

Staff receive appropriate safeguarding training. They identify and report concerns promptly. Leaders follow up staff concerns and pupil worries appropriately. Leaders work effectively to keep pupils safe, including working with other agencies where appropriate.

Leaders carry out the checks required on new staff and have appropriate procedures in place for visitors and supply staff to ensure they are suitable to work in schools.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Leaders have not provided training to ensure that teachers have the knowledge and expertise to plan and teach well enough in the foundation subjects. As a result, pupils do not build on previous learning, nor do they retain or apply important knowledge. Leaders need to ensure that staff have the subject-specific skills they need to ensure that pupils build their understanding well in all foundation subjects.
- A minority of pupils disrupt the learning of others, as their needs are not well enough met. This causes disruption to learning for other pupils and often means these pupils miss out on important learning themselves. Leaders need to ensure that pupils are well supported to address the root cause of behaviour issues so that they make positive choices and do not disrupt learning for others.
- Since the last inspection, governors have not challenged and supported leaders with enough rigour. As a result, some of their monitoring has lacked the necessary depth and detail to hold leaders to account well enough for the quality of education that pupils receive and the standard of pupils' behaviour. Governors need to undertake further training and support to ensure that there is sufficient rigour and depth in their challenge and that they fulfil all of their roles effectively.

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	115178
Local authority	Essex
Inspection number	10286245
Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	58
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Audrey Jones
Headteacher	Ruth Baugh
Website	www.lhandsmhboschools.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	25 and 26 April 2018, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school does not make use of any alternative provision.
- The school is part of The Federation with Little Hallingbury Primary School. The two schools share the same headteacher and same governing body. Each school is inspected separately by Ofsted and registered separately with the Department for Education.
- The headteacher took up post in May 2022. The headteacher is the executive headteacher of the federation. The headteacher is also the headteacher of White Notley Primary School, which is currently not part of the federation. The headteacher splits her time between these three schools.
- There is a single federation governing body that is responsible for governance of the school. The governing body is currently supported by an interim executive board, which was set up by the local authority shortly before the appointment of the current headteacher.
- The school currently operates three mixed-age classes. These are organised into: Reception and Year 1; Year 2 and Year 3; Year 4, Year 5 and Year 6.

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 this into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in the following subjects: geography, early reading, and mathematics. For each deep dive, inspectors met with curriculum leaders, looked at curriculum plans, visited a sample of lessons, spoke with teachers, spoke with some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- In addition to meetings with the headteacher and senior leadership team, the inspectors met with leaders in the following areas: behaviour and attendance, early years, personal development, safeguarding and pupils with SEND.
- An inspector spoke with the school improvement partner to discuss how they work with the school. An inspector met with representatives from the local governing body and interim executive board, separately, regarding governance.
- To gather their views on the school, inspectors spoke in formal meetings with groups of pupils. Inspectors spoke with pupils around the school site while they observed break and lunchtimes. Inspectors also considered the 31 responses to Ofsted's online survey for pupils.
- To evaluate the school's safeguarding culture, inspectors viewed safeguarding records and procedures and met with a range of pupils, staff and leaders.
- The 16 responses and 14 free-text responses made by parents to the online survey for parents, Ofsted Parent View, were considered. The inspectors also took account of the 11 responses to Ofsted's online staff questionnaire.

Inspection team

James Chester, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Susan Sutton

Ofsted Inspector

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