

# Inspection of a good school: Christ Church CofE (VA) Primary School and Nursery

New Road, Ware, Hertfordshire SG12 7BT

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Inspection dates:

19 and 20 July 2023

## Outcome

Christ Church CofE (VA) Primary School and Nursery continues to be a good school.

## What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils enjoy coming to this friendly school. Children in the nursery class settle well because staff take many steps to help them to make a smooth start to their education. Parents and carers say that this is a school with a great family feeling and a warm welcome. Pupils achieve well because of staff's high expectations.

Pupils of all ages play well together on the field at lunchtime. If pupils are unkind to each other, staff help them to sort out any differences of opinion or arguments. Pupils feel well cared for and know that if they need to talk to someone about their worries, there is always someone on hand.

Pupils concentrate in lessons and develop positive attitudes to their learning. Those who find it difficult to listen to teachers or concentrate are helped by skilled teaching assistants. Bullying is uncommon and staff deal with it well if it does happen.

Pupils eagerly take up positions of responsibility. These include house captains, eco champions, digital leaders, librarians and playleaders. After-school and lunchtime clubs are popular. Pupils gain new knowledge through diverse extra-curricular club opportunities, for example ocarina, choir, dance, computing and speed stacking club.

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

Children in the nursery get off to a good start. The carefully organised curriculum is used to plan children's learning effectively. Staff skilfully support children to use the well-organised indoor and outdoor learning environments successfully. Staff in the early years use high-quality talk and play to develop children's skills and knowledge well. However, despite the positive early years provision, some pupils in key stage 1 have not developed some of the basic skills that enable them to access all aspects of the curriculum. For example, some pupils do not hold their pencil correctly.

Children are introduced to a wide range of books from the moment they join the school. They regularly share stories and rhymes. Staff throughout the school nurture the love of reading through carefully chosen books. Teachers model reading and discuss the high-quality texts regularly. This supports pupils to read with fluency and develops their comprehension skills well.

Phonics teaching begins from the very start. Staff match reading books to pupils' phonic knowledge accurately. Teachers' phonic knowledge is secure. They use this to check pupils' phonic knowledge and quickly spot those who need help. Pupils who need additional help have extra practice, but this is not consistently of a high quality. On some occasions, pupils who find reading a challenge are not supported to progress as fast as they could.

Leaders are ambitious for pupils' learning. They have created a clearly sequenced and coherent curriculum from Nursery to Year 6. Leaders have identified the essential knowledge they want pupils to remember. Teaching supports pupils to practise and remember prior knowledge, skills and vocabulary effectively. This helps pupils to build knowledge over time. For example, in mathematics pupils use and apply what they know to answer problem-solving and reasoning questions confidently.

Leaders of special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) work with a wide range of external services to support pupils well. They have clear and established systems in place to identify pupils' additional needs accurately. Leaders engage parents in the target-setting and review process alongside their children. Appropriate support is put in place swiftly. For example, staff use appropriate targets and bespoke resources to meet pupils' needs effectively. This helps pupils with SEND to access learning alongside their peers and make good progress.

Staff have consistently high expectations of pupils' behaviour. This begins in the early years, where routines are quickly established. Some older pupils find it difficult to understand and manage their feelings. Leaders have rightly prioritised training for staff to help them support pupils' social and emotional needs. Staff are quick to spot pupils who need additional support. This helps pupils feel safe and behave well.

The personal, social and health education (PSHE) curriculum develops pupils' understanding of how to become responsible citizens. Pupils know about different world faiths and cultures. Teachers plan discussions and debates to help pupils develop tolerance and understanding of other people's views successfully.

The well-being of pupils, parents and staff has a high profile at the school. Staff appreciate leaders' consideration and support. Leaders' work with families has successfully improved pupils' attendance in recent years. Leaders, including governors, know the school's strengths and areas for development well. They have a clear vision for the school. There are robust systems in place to monitor and evaluate accurately the effectiveness of leaders' actions.

## Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

There is a strong culture of safeguarding. Leaders provide regular training for staff and governors. Staff know how to spot pupils who may be at risk. They pass on concerns promptly. Leaders support pupils' welfare. They work well with external agencies to provide additional help when needed. Record-keeping is detailed. Governors regularly check the school's safeguarding procedures.

Pupils know who to go to if they have a concern. They know that staff take their concerns seriously. Leaders ensure that the curriculum provides opportunities for pupils to learn how to stay safe, including when online.

## What does the school need to do to improve?

### (Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The breadth and flexibility of the support pupils receive when they are learning to read vary. As a result, a small number of pupils who find reading challenging are not progressing as fast as they could. Leaders should refresh training for all staff on how to assist pupils at an early stage of reading and ensure that there is a consistent approach to small-group and one-to-one reading.

## 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 second ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be good in July 2014.

## 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

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| <b>Unique reference number</b>             | 117473   |
| <b>Local authority</b>                     | Hertfordshire  |
| <b>Inspection number</b>                   | 10288464   |
| <b>Type of school</b>                      | Primary  |
| <b>School category</b>                     | Voluntary controlled   |
| <b>Age range of pupils</b>                 | 3 to 11  |
| <b>Gender of pupils</b>                    | Mixed  |
| <b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b> | 327  |
| <b>Appropriate authority</b>               | The governing body   |
| <b>Chair of governing body</b>             | Patrick Gold   |
| <b>Headteacher</b>                         | Ania Vaughan   |
| <b>Website</b>                             | <a href="http://www.christchurch.herts.sch.uk">www.christchurch.herts.sch.uk</a> |
| <b>Date of previous inspection</b>         | 11 January 2018, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005                       |

## Information about this school

- There is an after-school club and a breakfast club for pupils on site run by the school.
- The school does not currently use any alternative provision.

## 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 her evaluation of the school.
- The inspector carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics, art and design technology. For each deep dive, the inspector 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. The inspector also listened to a sample of pupils read to a familiar adult.
- The inspector held meetings with leaders, including the headteacher, deputy headteacher, assistant headteachers and the special educational needs coordinator, as well as with governors and a representative working on behalf of the local authority.

- The inspector took account of the 104 responses, along with 104 free-text comments, to Ofsted Parent View, Ofsted's online survey. The 33 responses to Ofsted's staff survey were also considered. There were no responses to the pupil survey. The inspector spoke to 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.
- The inspector reviewed a wide range of school documentation, including policies and development plans.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspector conducted meetings with leaders to discuss policy and procedure and to review records, including the school's single central record of recruitment and vetting checks. The inspector also held discussions with governors, staff and pupils to gather further insights into the culture of safeguarding.

### **Inspection team**

Bridget Harrison, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

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