

Inspection of Little Waltham Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School

The Street, Little Waltham, Chelmsford, Essex CM3 3NY

Inspection dates: 3 and 4 July 2023

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| Overall effectiveness | Good |
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| The quality of education | Good |
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| Behaviour and attitudes | Good |
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| Personal development | Good |
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| Leadership and management | Good |
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| Early years provision | Good |
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| Previous inspection grade | Good |
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What is it like to attend this school?

At Little Waltham, everyone believes that all pupils can 'live life in all its fullness'. Pupils build positive relationships with staff. These are very much appreciated by pupils. Parents value improved communication between home and school. Pupils happily attend school and enjoy starting the day being greeted by leaders.

Pupils' talents and interests are developed and nurtured. There is a variety of planned opportunities and visits to widen pupil's horizons. For example, a trip to the West End and the 'Little Waltham speech festival'. Pupils talk about these with excitement.

Pupils enjoy their learning. They learn a wide vocabulary and use it well. The work that pupils are given builds their knowledge over time. Pupils learn to read well and enjoy the books of culturally diverse authors.

All pupils have someone to talk to. They do not feel worried at this school. There are a range of workshops and lessons on staying safe, including online. Bullying is simply not tolerated here. However, pupils would like adults to be more consistent in how they respond to disruption in lessons. Pupils engage in purposeful and respectful play. As a result, pupils call their school 'a safe and happy place'.

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

Leaders have a clear and ambitious vision for a high-quality education and wider development for all pupils, regardless of their background. While much is new this year, it has been designed to prepare pupils for the future and provide a wide range of opportunities. Much of this vision is already realised through the swift actions of leaders.

Changes have been made to ensure what leaders intend for pupils to learn helps pupils achieve well. Leaders have thought about the important knowledge and vocabulary that pupils need to learn. Where this is now well established, teachers understand and plan activities around the important knowledge. Secure subject knowledge allows teachers to explain new concepts with skill. As a result, pupils build on their learned knowledge over time.

Leaders have developed a chosen strategy that focuses on developing vocabulary and speech. Pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), respond to this well. However, systems for checking if pupils are learning the important knowledge are still being developed in a small number of subjects. Where this is the case, leaders do not have as accurate a view of how well pupils learn the curriculum in these subjects. Leaders have secure plans in place to address this.

Pupils with SEND receive help quickly. This is because leaders train staff to identify the needs of these pupils. Support for pupils with SEND is well planned and adaptations are made to ensure pupils access the same curriculum as their peers. Leaders seek out and heed external support when appropriate. As a result, pupils with SEND achieve well.

Leaders have ensured the curriculum for reading is taught well. Pupils are swiftly taught the sounds and how to blend them to read words. Books are chosen to match the sounds that pupils know. For those who need additional help, support is aimed directly at their point of need. Therefore, pupils learn to read well. The books that pupils study are chosen to match up with the values of the school. This further develops pupils' knowledge of these values as well as their love for reading.

Children in Reception get off to a good start. Children use the newly developed environment to play and learn well. They have opportunities to practise important skills, such as reading and writing. Teachers plan activities that deepen children's knowledge and thinking. Children are well prepared for key stage 1.

Leaders monitor behaviour and identify where improvements could be made. For example, leaders have provided a range of exciting and engaging opportunities at lunchtime. As a result, there is a calm environment outside of the classroom. Most lessons are characterised by purposeful, focused learning. However, some adults do not tackle disruption quickly enough. When this occurs, there is minor disruption to the learning of pupils.

Attendance is improving for all pupils. Previously, there was not enough attention on ensuring pupils attended school regularly. Leaders target support for families. This has enabled more pupils to be in school and learning.

Governors work closely with leaders for the benefit of the school. There is a suitable balance of challenge and support for leaders. Governors ensure they visit regularly to gather a wide range of evidence to see what is working well and what needs to improve further.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

There is regular training for all staff and governors, including new staff on induction. Staff are vigilant towards risks. Weekly briefings maintain the culture of safeguarding. Leaders know the importance of safer recruitment and use this knowledge when recruiting new staff to work with pupils.

Staff know how to identify those pupils that need help and report all concerns. Leaders use rigorous record keeping and liaison with external agencies. They ensure they secure the right help for families and pupils in a timely fashion.

Pupils understand potential risks and dangers on and offline. They know how to keep themselves safe.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Much of the curriculum has been reviewed and is newly implemented. Assessment practices in some areas are still being developed and are not as established as in some aspects of the curriculum. This means leaders do not have as accurate a view of how well pupils learn in a small number of subjects. Leaders should implement their plans, ensuring they adapt and refine their assessment processes in these few remaining subjects, so leaders can check accurately how well pupils learn the curriculum.
- The behaviour policy is not always applied consistently across the school. This means that in some classes, low-level disruption is tolerated and disrupts the learning of other pupils. Leaders should ensure that all staff are trained to apply the high expectations leaders have with consistency.

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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| Unique reference number | 115175 |
| Local authority | Essex |
| Inspection number | 10287091 |
| 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 | 204 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair of governing body | Diane Regan |
| Headteacher | Stephen Saunders |
| Website | www.little-waltham-school.co.uk |
| Date of previous inspection | 6 October 2020, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 |

Information about this school

- The headteacher joined the school in September 2022.
- The school makes use of one registered alternative provider.
- This is a Church of England primary school. The school's most recent section 48 inspection took place in September 2022. 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.

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.

- The inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics, geography and physical education. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with the subject leader, looked at curriculum plans, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. The inspectors also looked at other curriculum plans, including science and history.
- The inspectors met with the headteacher, the deputy headteacher, subject leaders and the special educational needs coordinator.
- To inspect safeguarding, meetings were held with the designated safeguarding lead, teachers and pupils. The lead inspector also reviewed records, policies and documents relating to safeguarding.
- To evaluate aspects of the school's and leaders' work, the lead inspector met with governors, the diocesan representative, and the local authority improvement partner.
- The inspectors scrutinised a range of documentation relating to safeguarding, behaviour, and attendance.
- To gather pupils' views, inspectors observed and spoke to pupils, including at breaktimes. Inspectors reviewed the 24 responses to Ofsted's questionnaire for pupils. The inspectors also spoke to pupils about behaviour.
- Inspectors reviewed the 51 responses and the 35 free-text comments submitted to Ofsted Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire for parents. The inspectors considered comments made by parents in person and via letters.
- The inspectors took account of the 24 responses to Ofsted's questionnaire for school staff.

Inspection team

Conor Heaven, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Nicola Shadbolt

Ofsted Inspector

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