

Inspection of a good school: Polebrook Church of England Primary School

Main Street, Polebrook, Peterborough, Cambridgeshire PE8 5LN

Inspection date:

20 September 2023

Outcome

Polebrook Church of England Primary School continues to be a good school.

The headteacher of this school is Lou Coulthard. The school is part of the Rutland Learning Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer, Robert Gooding, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by James Benedict John Saunders. The headteacher is responsible for this school and one other.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils know they are well cared for in this inclusive and welcoming school. Pupils enjoy school. They feel happy and safe. Relationships are warm and trusting. Parents and carers also recognise this. One parent, typical of many, said: 'You can tell the staff care, and you can't fake that.' Most parents are highly supportive of the school.

Pupils respond well to the high expectations staff have of them. Classrooms are busy and purposeful. Pupils are encouraged to think independently. They talk enthusiastically about the 'learning dinosaurs' and 'amazing people'. Most pupils achieve well, especially in reading.

The school promotes pupils' spiritual, social, moral and cultural development well. Staff organise many events for all pupils, such as the 'kid lit' and other reading festivals, residential trips, immersion days for science and mathematics, and visits to a local nursing home.

Pupils attend and behave well. They display positive attitudes towards learning and respond promptly to instructions from staff. Pupils have every confidence that any concerns they have will be quickly dealt with. They appreciate the worry 'boxes' and 'monsters' in school. Pupils know and embrace the school's Christian values and the British values in their conduct with others. The pupils are a credit to the school.

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

Strong leadership, including subject leadership, lies at the heart of the school's ambitious, broad and inclusive curriculum for all pupils. The precise knowledge and skills pupils should learn are clear and build from Reception to the end of Year 6 and beyond. Staff know exactly what is taught and when, including for each of the 'big enquiry questions' in the foundation subjects.

A high-quality curriculum in the early years means that children are well prepared for Year 1. The learning environment in Reception is stimulating and well organised. Learning activities are purposeful. Children enjoy high-quality interactions with adults. They learn social skills quickly, such as sharing and taking turns. Routines are well established, right from the start.

An exceptionally strong culture of reading exists across the school. The school has recently invested in new reading books to promote guided pupil choice. Pupils look forward to story time. They enjoy the interactive style of storytelling by their teachers and are often willing to join in with discussions. Pupils and staff further enjoy the school's reading events, including visits from guest authors.

The teaching of phonics and early reading is typically effective. Children learn to read as soon as they join Reception. Staff are well trained in the systematic delivery of the school's phonics scheme. Books are well matched to the sounds pupils are learning. Staff frequently check that pupils are on track to achieve the expected standard by the end of Year 1. Most pupils achieve this standard successfully. Some pupils who are at a very early stage of learning to read use their phonic knowledge well to decode words using the sounds they have learned. Sometimes, however, they struggle to blend letter sounds back into words. The school is aware that there is some work to do to ensure that the extra help these pupils receive is having the desired impact.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are mostly well supported. All staff have the information they need to help these pupils. The school works well with parents and external services to help ensure that these pupils get the support they need.

Teachers typically have good subject knowledge. In most subjects, they use this well to plan engaging learning activities and to question pupils. Pupils in key stage 2 know how to test the requirements to, for example, make different electrical circuits work. Pupils respond well in lessons when expectations are consistently high. Sometimes, however, teachers and other adults move on to new ideas too quickly before some pupils have fully grasped what has been taught. Sometimes, pupils who finish tasks are not sure what they should be doing next. The school is aware of this issue, and work is under way to resolve it. Nevertheless, a small number of pupils, including vulnerable pupils, do not always achieve as well as they might.

The school takes pupils' personal development seriously. The school's curriculum for personal, social, economic and health development (PSHE) is interwoven with Christian and British values. Pupils have a strong understanding of equality and treating everyone with respect.

All leaders, including trust leaders and governors, have a precise understanding of the school's strengths and improvement priorities. Staff say they feel valued. They know that leaders are mindful of their well-being and workload.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In some subjects, teachers and other supporting adults move on to new learning tasks before ensuring that all pupils, including vulnerable pupils, have understood what has been taught. They do not always identify pupils' misconceptions and correct these quickly enough. When this happens, a small number of pupils lose focus, and their concentration drifts. Gaps in their knowledge develop as a result. The school should ensure that all staff know how best to check pupils' understanding before moving learning on so that pupils develop confidence and achieve as well as they can.

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 predecessor school, Polebrook Church of England Primary School, to be good in October 2010.

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' is used to mean pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND); pupils who meet the [definition of children in need of help and protection](#); pupils receiving statutory local authority support from a social worker; and pupils who otherwise meet the criteria used for deciding the school's [pupil premium funding](#) (this includes pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years, looked after children (children in local authority care) and/or children who left care through adoption or another formal route).

School details

Unique reference number	148257
Local authority	North Northamptonshire
Inspection number	10288386
Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	5 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	80
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	James Benedict John Saunders
Headteacher	Lou Coulthard
Website	www.polebrook.northants.sch.uk/
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- Polebrook Church of England Primary School converted to become an academy in November 2020. When its predecessor school, Polebrook Church of England Primary School, was last inspected by Ofsted, it was judged to be good overall.
- The school is part of the Diocese of Peterborough. The most recent section 48 inspection of this Church of England school, which is an inspection of the school's religious character, took place in July 2023.
- The school does not use any alternative education provision.

Information about this inspection

- Inspections are a point-in-time judgement about the quality of a school's education provision.
- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors met with the headteacher and other members of staff, including the school's coordinator for pupils with SEND.

- The lead inspector met with two members of the school's local governing body. He also met with two leaders from the trust, including the chief executive officer.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in early reading, mathematics and science. For each deep dive, inspectors held discussions about 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 lead inspector also considered curriculum documentation for a range of other subjects, including computing and PSHE.
- The lead inspector listened to pupils from key stage 1 and Year 3 read to a familiar adult.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour in lessons and around the school site during playtime and lunchtime in the main hall. They spoke with several groups of pupils, both formally and informally.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, inspectors reviewed the single central record, took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils, and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding.
- Inspectors considered the responses to Ofsted Parent View and Ofsted's survey for staff and pupils.

Inspection team

Chris Stevens, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Jamie Nairn

Ofsted Inspector

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