

Inspection of a good school: Church Cowley St James Church of England Primary School

Bartholomew Road, Cowley, Oxford, Oxfordshire OX4 3QH

Inspection dates:

19 and 20 September 2023

Outcome

Church Cowley St James Church of England Primary School continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

'Strength to do right' is the deeply embedded motto of this school. This is a school that wants the very best for its pupils. There is a culture of high ambition for all, and most pupils are achieving well by the time they move on to secondary school. Pupils consistently display the shared values of 'tolerance, respect, moral courage and compassion' towards each other, staff and visitors.

Pupils are very happy at this inclusive school. They know their views matter and feel valued. They learn how to look after their physical and mental well-being. Opportunities for pupils to talk to a trusted adult about their feelings are always available. They know how to keep themselves safe, including when online.

A wide range of clubs, trips and experiences ensure that pupils get the chance to foster their interests and talents. Pupils are very proud to belong to this school and enjoy celebrating their own and others' success.

The safety of pupils is top priority. Parents and carers appreciate the care taken to get to know each child as an individual and to help them flourish. As one parent said, 'This is a great school which puts pupils' needs and development first.'

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

The school provides a broad and rich curriculum which is carefully sequenced and sets out clearly what pupils should know and be able to do. There is a shared understanding of how pupils learn well. On the whole, staff check on pupil's previous learning before moving them on in lessons. Staff plan opportunities to remind pupils of the subject knowledge they have learned in the past. In subjects such as mathematics, teaching is carefully adapted to include everyone, including those with special educational needs and

disabilities. However, in some subjects, the delivery of the planned curriculum is not as consistent as it could be, and pupil knowledge is less secure.

Children in early years begin to learn phonics following a systematic and structured teaching approach. They continue to build their knowledge through key stage 1, learning and recognising increasingly complex sounds. The teaching of early reading is mostly consistent, and pupils understand the routines and respond well. The school has carefully selected the high-quality books they want to share with pupils. These books expose pupils to an extensive range of authors, text types and vocabulary, as well as celebrate the diverse community. The school recognises that there is a small group of pupils who are struggling to learn, including learning to read, and work to support this group is in its early stages.

The early years learning environment is welcoming, purposeful and engaging. It is a place where children build positive relationships with each other and with staff. Right from the start, children learn important skills such as curiosity and resilience. Staff teach children to regulate their emotions and take turns with equipment. Partnership with parents and carers is strong and built upon effective communication.

Expectations of behaviour in and out of lessons are high. Pupils are polite and courteous. In lessons, staff help them to focus on their work, and they listen carefully. Pupils follow the established rules and routines well. As a result, the school environment is calm and purposeful. Staff skilfully support any pupil who may require extra help with their social and emotional skills.

The school's work to develop pupils' character and provide meaningful spiritual, moral, social and cultural experiences is extensive. Personal, social, health and economic education helps get pupils ready for their move to secondary school and life in modern Britain. Pupils have regular opportunities to learn from visitors and activities beyond the classroom. From their first weeks in school, children learn to understand that we are all different and that makes us unique. Pupils help to create inclusive classrooms and shared environments where everyone is valued.

School attendance is not as high as it should be, and some pupils remain persistently absent. These pupils miss out on important learning and are at risk of falling behind their peers. The school's strategic oversight of attendance is not as strong as it could be. As a result, not all pupils, including some of the most vulnerable, achieve as well as they could.

Staff are very proud to work at this school and appreciate the support they receive to improve professionally. One staff member summed this up saying, 'The best thing leaders do for my well-being is help me get better at what I do.' Leaders are mindful of staff workload and do all they can to manage this effectively.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In a small number of subjects, the curriculum is not yet taught consistently well. As a result, some pupils do not always learn and remember important knowledge. The school should ensure that all staff understand what is expected in every subject so that pupils can achieve highly across all subjects.
- In some areas of the curriculum, a small group of pupils, including some disadvantaged pupils, do not get the support they need to catch up with their peers quickly. This means they do not achieve as well as they could at the end of each stage. The school should continue to implement the improvements that are planned to ensure that these pupils are well prepared for the next phase of learning.
- Too many pupils do not attend school as often as they should. This means that they frequently miss important learning. The school should work strategically to review attendance procedures and then implement them robustly to reduce pupil absence.

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 first ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be good in March 2018.

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	123139
Local authority	Oxfordshire
Inspection number	10287940
Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	461
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	James Rogers
Headteacher	Steve Dew
Website	www.churchcowley.com
Dates of previous inspection	6 and 7 March 2018

Information about this school

- The school runs a breakfast and after-school club for pupils who attend the school.
- The school does not currently use any alternative provision.
- The school is a Church of England voluntary-controlled school and part of the Oxford diocese. The last section 48 inspection took place on 29 November 2021 and the next inspection should be within 5 years of this date.

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. The inspector discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and has taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- The inspector held meetings with the headteacher and other senior leaders. The inspector met with the chair of governors. He also had telephone conversations with a representative from Oxfordshire County Council and with a representative of the Oxfordshire Diocesan Board of Education.

- The inspector carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics and geography. For each deep dive, the inspector held discussions about the curriculum, 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 heard pupils read to a member of staff.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspector 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 that puts pupils' interests first.
- The inspector took account of parents' responses to Ofsted's survey, Ofsted Parent View, and parents' written comments.
- The inspector gathered pupils' views throughout the day, including during lesson visits, and at lunchtime.
- The inspector met with staff to gather their views about the school and took account of staff's responses to Ofsted's confidential staff survey.

Inspection team

Alan Derry, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

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