

Inspection of The Wickford Church of England School

Mount Road, Wickford, Essex SS11 8HE

Inspection dates: 13 and 14 September 2023

Overall effectiveness	Outstanding
The quality of education	Outstanding
Behaviour and attitudes	Outstanding
Personal development	Outstanding
Leadership and management	Outstanding
Early years provision	Outstanding
Previous inspection grade	Outstanding

The headteacher of this school is Annie Bristow. The school is part of the HEARTS Academy Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer, Debbie Rogan, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Vaughan Collier. There is also a deputy chief executive officer and executive headteacher, Louise Johnson, who is responsible for the school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are very happy at school. They feel safe, and they know exactly what to do to keep themselves safe, both in and out of school, as well as online. Pupils demonstrate the school's values of happiness, esteem, achievement, respect and responsibility, value of truth, and service and spirituality in all that they do.

Pupils behave and learn extremely well. They work hard to meet staff's high expectations. Pupils have a positive attitude to their learning. They take pride in everything that they do and produce high-quality work.

Extra-curricular activities and clubs are carefully planned to support pupils' learning in the classroom. The 'HEARTS Promise' ensures that pupils have bespoke memories from their time at the school, including staying away from home for a night or trying to break a world, national or trust record. These experiences support pupils' personal development and increase their self-esteem and resilience.

Within the school, pupils' well-being is a high priority. The 'Mental Health Champions', as well as the trust's counsellor, are integral to supporting this.

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

The school's curriculum has been well thought through. It is highly ambitious, offering a wide range of subjects for all the pupils. The school has identified the essential knowledge and skills that each pupil should learn in each subject. Teachers use questioning and assessment very effectively. This helps pupils remember important knowledge and use it well.

Teachers have an in-depth knowledge of the subjects they teach. They use this to plan well-thought-through, highly effective sequences of lessons. This ensures that all pupils, from early years to Year 2, make very strong progress in all subjects. Pupils achieve consistently highly.

The school prides itself on providing a bespoke curriculum for all pupils, including disadvantaged pupils and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Staff are ambitious for all pupils. They identify pupils' needs accurately and carefully plan the next steps in their learning. Staff are highly skilled at adapting their teaching. Pupils and parents work alongside staff to ensure that pupils do their best.

The school emphasises the importance of all pupils being able to read well. This starts in the Nursery, where children learn letter sounds. Staff teach phonics consistently and well throughout the school. They ensure that the books pupils read are well matched to the sounds they learn in lessons. This enables pupils to practise the sounds and read fluently. Adults carefully check pupils' progress in reading. If needed, extra support is swiftly put in place so that pupils do not fall behind. This enables pupils to quickly become confident and fluent readers.

Pupils love to read. The school and class libraries have well-chosen and high-quality books. The school carefully selects the books that adults read to pupils. This ensures that the books cover a range of themes and link to the HEARTS values and to pupils' learning. Reluctant readers are successfully encouraged to read to Daisy, the school dog. This motivates pupils to widen their choice of books.

Pupils have a high level of respect for each other. They have positive attitudes to their learning. Pupils respond well to the high expectations from the very start. They enjoy working towards recognition for their behaviours, including gaining a 'HEARTS values sticker' and a personalised postcard from the headteacher. The calm and nurturing environment ensures that pupils support each other in lessons and at playtime. Therefore, pupils are keen and eager to attend school punctually every day.

The school has constructed a coherently planned personal development programme. This is woven through everything pupils learn. Staff carefully select texts, topics and examples of significant people for pupils to learn about. This enables pupils to learn about other cultures and beliefs and how their community is different to others.

Pupils highlight their character development in their young leader passports. These demonstrate how pupils work together and take action and show perseverance and kindness. Pupils can do this in many ways, including by helping a friend, working hard on their learning or working together to complete some work.

The school ensures that staff are highly motivated and skilled through effective professional development opportunities. The school promotes staff well-being through actively seeking and responding to staff's views about what can make things even better for them and the pupils. Parents are overwhelmingly positive about the school and the progress that their children are making.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

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	137744
Local authority	Essex
Inspection number	10259288
Type of school	Infant
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	2 to 7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	135
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of governing body	Sue Adams
Headteacher	Annie Bristow
Website	www.hearts-wickfordcofe.uk
Date of previous inspection	15 November 2013 under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school is part of the HEARTS Academy Trust.
- The school has provision for two-year-old children.
- The school does not currently use any alternative provision.
- The school has a Christian religious character. The most recent Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (section 48) took place in March 2018. The school will be inspected under section 48 within eight years of this date.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

- 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.
- The lead inspector spoke with governors from the local advisory board, including the chair and the chair of trustees. She spoke on the telephone with a representative of the Diocese of Chelmsford.
- The lead inspector met with the executive headteacher and the chief executive officer of HEARTS Academy Trust.
- The inspectors carried out deep dives in early reading, mathematics, history, and art. For each deep dive, inspectors held discussions about the curriculum, visited a sample of lessons, spoke with teachers, spoke with some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors also discussed the curriculum in music and computing with subject leads, as well as looking at samples of pupils' work and curriculum plans.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the 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 that puts pupils' interests first.
- Inspectors gathered the views of pupils by speaking to them during lessons, in the dining hall and at breaktimes. There were no responses to Ofsted's pupil survey.
- Inspectors spoke to groups of staff to gather their views of the school. Twenty-five responses to Ofsted's staff survey were also considered.
- The inspectors considered 60 responses to Ofsted's online survey, Ofsted Parent View. They spoke to parents at the school gate. Inspectors also considered correspondence sent directly to the team.

Inspection team

Katie Devenport, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Craige Brown

Ofsted Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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