

# Inspection of Victoria Church of England Infant and Nursery School

Prince Edward Street, Berkhamsted, Hertfordshire HP4 3HA

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Inspection dates: 3 and 4 October 2023

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>Requires improvement</b>
The quality of education	<b>Requires improvement</b>
Behaviour and attitudes	<b>Good</b>
Personal development	<b>Good</b>
Leadership and management	<b>Requires improvement</b>
Early years provision	<b>Good</b>
Previous inspection grade	Outstanding

This school was last inspected under section 5 of the Education Act 2005 14 years ago and judged 'Outstanding' under a previous inspection framework. This reflected the school's overall effectiveness under the inspection framework in use at the time.

From then until November 2020, the school was exempted by law from routine inspection, so there has been a longer gap than usual between graded inspections under section 5 of the Act. Judgements in this report are based on the current inspection framework and also reflect changes that may have happened at any point since the last graded inspection.

## **What is it like to attend this school?**

Victoria is a safe and orderly place. Pupils are happy here. They enjoy positive relationships with caring staff. Children in the early years learn and play in a stimulating environment. They build their curiosity and independence. Pupils understand and embody the school's values.

Pupils learn a well-planned curriculum. They enjoy learning. However, the curriculum is not always delivered as well as it should be. This means pupils do not remember enough of their previous learning. In particular, those pupils learning to read do not get supported as well as they need.

There are high expectations of behaviour. This helps pupils focus in lessons. They behave well in breaks and as they walk around the school. Pupils respond well to clear routines. They learn to be considerate, such as through the 'Kindness Week'.

Pupils benefit from a range of opportunities. Engaging clubs extend what they learn in class. For instance, lunchtime activities support pupils' physical development and health. They go on exciting trips, for example to the theatre. Pupils' views are sought, such as if they feel safe. Pupils volunteer for the school and eco councils. These experiences develop pupils' character.

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

It has been a long time since Ofsted inspected the school. Recently, a new leadership team has reviewed much of the provision. Some of this work has had a positive impact, particularly in regard to pupils' behaviour and personal development. The school has established a vigilant culture of safeguarding. However, the school's aim to improve the curriculum is not fully embedded.

The curriculum is well designed. It identifies what should be taught in different subjects, and when. Teachers have suitable subject knowledge. They explain new content helpfully. In some areas, such as mathematics, pupils achieve well. That said, what pupils learn is not always checked as well as it should be. Subject leaders do not use information from assessment as precisely as they might. This means the next learning does not routinely address gaps in pupils' knowledge. Consequently, pupils do not remember enough of what they learn, especially from the longer term.

Reading has not been sufficiently prioritised. Teachers deliver the phonics scheme appropriately. However, there is not enough urgency when pupils fall behind. The weakest readers do not get effective support. The books pupils read are not precisely matched to the sounds they know. Consequently, they struggle to read fluently. While this is the case, the school has developed an effective culture of reading for pleasure. For example, the library has been improved considerably.

Not all staff know how to teach the curriculum effectively. This is both in early reading and other subjects. In some aspects, staff support pupils well. Pupils with

special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) get the help they require. Their needs are accurately identified. Staff carefully adapt learning so that pupils with SEND access the full curriculum. Staff have had training in putting the curriculum in place. However, it has not been specific or effective enough. This means that, when pupils struggle to understand learning, they do not always get the help they should.

Teaching is more successful in the early years. Leaders and staff work closely to ensure that children learn well. Early years staff are more confident in supporting learning. This is especially so in the strong nursery provision. Staff use interactions skilfully to develop children's vocabulary. Children show high engagement with their learning.

The school has a well-considered behaviour policy. Leaders have communicated this carefully to staff and pupils. As a result, the policy is consistently applied. Any incidents get resolved quickly. Leaders deal with the underlying causes of misbehaviour and low attendance. Therefore, pupils attend and behave well.

The curriculum supports pupils' personal development effectively. It teaches them about important areas, for example how to stay safe. Pupils learn things that they find relevant and meaningful, such as what makes good and bad friendships. They talk articulately about their understanding of those from different backgrounds to themselves.

Governors have the skills and knowledge to fulfil their role. They ensure they get the training they need, such as using data to scrutinise leaders' work better. Governors monitor safeguarding closely. They support and challenge leaders effectively, such as regarding attendance.

The school works and communicates successfully with the community. Parents are very positive about their children's experience. Typical comments praise the 'nurturing', 'caring' and 'safe' environment, particularly regarding the nursery.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

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

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

- The school does not give the weakest readers the support they need. Pupils read books that do not match precisely enough the sounds they know. This means that pupils do not learn quickly to read with fluency. The school needs to review the support given to early readers, and ensure that this is provided effectively, so that the weakest readers remember their sounds better and can use these to build up their skills and confidence in reading.

- The school does not use assessment as effectively as it could to check and ensure that pupils remember what they have learned in the longer term. As a result, some pupils lack the sticky knowledge they need to build up a detailed understanding of their subjects. The school needs to ensure it uses the information from checks on learning, both in lessons and at the end of units of learning, to adapt the next curriculum delivery effectively. This will enable pupils to remember more of what they learn in the longer term.
- Not all staff know how to support pupils well, whether within lessons or outside. They are not all clear on how to stop pupils falling behind, or how to successfully support those who do. This is both in early reading and in some foundation subjects. The school needs to ensure that all staff get the training and monitoring they need to be able to support pupils effectively with their learning, so that the implementation of the curriculum is more consistently 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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	117423
<b>Local authority</b>	Hertfordshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	10267846
<b>Type of school</b>	Infant
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary aided
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3 to 7
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	170
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair of governing body</b>	Elaine Bunn
<b>Headteacher</b>	Lisa Freeman
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.victoria.herts.sch.uk">www.victoria.herts.sch.uk</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	8 July 2009

## Information about this school

- Since September 2017, the school has been part of the Castle Church of England Federation. This is a federation with The Thomas Coram Church of England School, a local junior school. The two schools share a single governing body. The school has two co-chairs of governors, Elaine Bunn and Alex Fahey.
- The headteacher was appointed on 1 September 2022.
- The school does not use alternative provision.
- There is a well-attended after-school club. There is a breakfast club on site run by a private provider.
- The school has a Christian character and was last inspected under Section 48 of the Education Act 2005 on 2 December 2021. The school's next section 48 inspection will be within eight years.

## 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.
- Inspectors met with the headteacher, staff and pupils. The lead inspector met with a large group of governors, including the two co-chairs. The team inspector spoke by phone with a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics, geography, and physical education. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, met with teachers, met with some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. In early reading, this consisted of listening to pupils read to a familiar adult.
- As part of evaluating the effectiveness of safeguarding, inspectors met with leaders, governors, staff and pupils. Inspectors scrutinised the school's single central record of recruitment and vetting checks. They considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.
- Inspectors reviewed a wide range of documents, including curriculum plans, school development plans, policies and documentation for behaviour and attendance, and minutes of local governing body meetings.
- Inspectors considered the 87 responses to the online survey, Ofsted Parent View, and the 64 free-text comments submitted. They considered the 22 responses to Ofsted's questionnaire for staff, and the 17 responses to Ofsted's questionnaire for pupils.

## Inspection team

Charlie Fordham, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Jonny Wallace

His Majesty's Inspector

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