

Inspection of St Nicholas Church of England Primary, Hurst

School Road, Hurst, Wokingham, Berkshire RG10 0DR

Inspection dates: 18 and 19 October 2023

Overall effectiveness	Good
The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Outstanding
Leadership and management	Good
Early years provision	Good
Previous inspection grade	Not previously inspected under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

The head of school is Sarah Hilling. This school is part of The Keys 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, Hester Wooller, who is also the executive headteacher. The trust is overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by David Horrocks.

What is it like to attend this school?

This is a friendly and welcoming school. Staff work hard to ensure that pupils feel safe and happy. The school's values of believing and achieving through respect, honesty, courage and kindness are known to all. Pupils respond well to the high expectations regarding their behaviour. Pupils enjoy being greeted at the gate by the school dog, who is in school frequently. Children quickly settle in and learn school routines well. Pupils in Year 6 take their role of mentoring Reception-age children seriously.

Pupils say they enjoy coming to school because they love being with their friends and learning about the world. The school has high academic expectations, which pupils strive hard to meet. Pupils are enthusiastic when talking about their learning. Those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) achieve well during their time at this school.

The school grounds and rural location are well used to develop the wider curriculum. 'The Professor's Garden' at the front of the school celebrates the natural diversity of plants and animals in the area. Pupils enjoy taking on responsibilities and show great enthusiasm for their roles. They enjoy supporting the local community, for example by collecting food for the local food bank.

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

The curriculum covers all of the content set out in the national curriculum. It is adapted to meet the needs and interests of pupils who attend this school. For example, Year 6 pupils observe and measure features of the nearby River Thames as part of their geography fieldwork. Staff have worked hard to ensure that in most subjects they have carefully considered the knowledge that pupils need to know in order to make gains in their understanding. However, in a few subjects, staff are still identifying the important knowledge they want pupils to learn.

In Reception, the curriculum is carefully planned to prepare children for their future learning. In the rest of the school, most curriculum subjects are well designed. Teachers carefully check pupils' understanding and make sure that pupils have ample opportunity to review their previous learning. This enables pupils to fully embed their understanding and make meaningful links between lessons and subjects. However, in a few subjects, staff are still considering what strategies work best to help pupils remember long term the content they have been taught. In these subjects, pupils do not consistently recall knowledge as fluently as they could. Methods used to identify pupils with SEND are sometimes unclear. However, this does not impact on pupils' learning, and pupils with SEND learn well alongside their peers. This is because staff are precisely aware of their needs. Where necessary, the curriculum is successfully adapted.

Reading is a priority in the school. From the early years, children develop an understanding of the sounds of letters and how to blend them together to make

words. Pupils enjoy reading and quickly become fluent readers. Those who have fallen behind are given additional support to catch up. Pupils access a range of books in the school libraries. Visiting authors also help to develop pupils' reading experiences when reading their books aloud to pupils.

Pupils behave well in lessons and learning is rarely disrupted. Pupils' behaviour seldom falls below the school's expectations. However, on those rare occasions, timely support is put in place and pupils are helped to understand the impact of their actions on others.

The provision for pupils' personal development is exceptional. Pupils access a rich range of experiences, including on residential trips. Staff focus carefully on developing pupils' interests and talents and provide many opportunities for these to be further developed. There are numerous extra-curricular clubs that cater for sports, music and craft interests. Pupils are encouraged to take part in local community events, such as singing and dancing at the Hurst Show and playing in the band at the end-of-year family event. Pupils learn about significant issues affecting the wider world. Leaders ensure that pupils are given many opportunities to consider their future careers. Parents come into school and talk about the world of work and the range of options that are available. There are numerous opportunities for pupils to take on leadership roles. The school council, for example, has helped to fundraise for climbing equipment in the playground.

Staff are positive about the support they have from those with leadership responsibilities at the school. All staff who replied to the survey are proud to work at the school. They say their workload and well-being are always considered. Those with governance responsibilities, including members of the local governing body, have a clear oversight as to what is working well and what needs to improve further.

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 few subjects, the school has not identified, or considered how to check, the important knowledge it intends pupils to learn. This means that pupils' learning is sometimes variable. The school needs to identify the knowledge it intends all pupils to learn and help them to integrate new knowledge into larger ideas. The school also needs to check how well pupils have recalled the essential content and adapt its teaching accordingly so that all pupils know more and remember more over time.
- Some subject leaders are new to their roles. They are still developing their understanding of what works best and what needs to improve further. This means that they are not able to consistently evaluate the effectiveness of the curriculum.

The school should ensure that it provides high-quality training and development so that staff can successfully implement and evaluate how well pupils are learning the intended curriculum.

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	147377
Local authority	Wokingham
Inspection number	10296536
Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	140
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	David Horrocks
CEO of the trust	Hester Wooller
Headteacher	Hester Wooller (Executive Headteacher) Sarah Hilling (Head of School)
Website	www.st-nicholas.wokingham.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- St Nicholas Church of England Primary School converted to become an academy in September 2019. When its predecessor school, St Nicholas Church of England Primary School, was last inspected by Ofsted, it was judged to be good overall.
- The school currently uses no alternative provision.
- The school's last Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) took place in January 2017. The school's next SIAMS inspection is due to take place during the 2024 school year.
- The school is a sponsor-led academy and one of ten Church of England primary schools in The Keys Academy Trust.

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 carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, geography, mathematics and physical education. For each deep dive, inspectors 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 lead inspector observed some pupils reading to a familiar adult.
- 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.
- The inspectors had meetings with school leaders. The lead inspector held meetings with representatives from the local governing body, trustees and the chief executive officer. She also had a phone call with a representative from the Diocese of Oxford.
- Inspectors spoke with staff about their workload and well-being. They also considered the views of staff shared through Ofsted's survey for staff.
- The inspectors observed pupils' behaviour in lessons. They spoke with groups of pupils about their experiences at school. They also considered the views of pupils shared through Ofsted's survey for pupils.
- Responses to Ofsted Parent View were considered. This included the free-text responses.

Inspection team

Liz Bowes, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Susan Kelly

Ofsted Inspector

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