

Inspection of Barkway VA Church of England First School

84 High Street, Barkway, Royston, Hertfordshire SG8 8EF

Inspection dates: 8 and 9 November 2023

Overall effectiveness **Good**

The quality of education **Good**

Behaviour and attitudes **Good**

Personal development **Good**

Leadership and management **Good**

Early years provision **Good**

Previous inspection grade Good

What is it like to attend this school?

This is a warm, welcoming and nurturing school. Pupils are well looked after and enjoy school. They feel safe. They know that adults in school care about them and will sort out any problems. Pupils behave well in class. Playtimes are calm and happy occasions.

Pupils learn about different cultures and religions. The school has made valuable connections with a school in Kenya and with a large primary school in East London. This helps pupils to understand communities that are different to their own. Pupils learn to respect each other. They show this, for example, when speaking about each other's work.

Pupils have opportunities to spend time with older pupils on the Barley site. They come together for occasions such as sports days and Christmas events and take part in a range of activities to raise money for charities and the local community. Pupils can take on responsibilities. The Year 1 school council members spoke about how they voted for and chose the play equipment for the school.

School assemblies and weekly newsletters provide opportunities for pupils to showcase their best work. Pupils recognise their own successes and are proud of their achievements. As a result, pupils develop as independent and confident learners. They achieve well.

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

Leaders have designed an exciting and ambitious curriculum that is taught well and meets the precise needs of the pupils. Since the previous inspection, leaders have reorganised year groups so that early years and Year 1 pupils are taught on the Barkway site. Within their different roles, staff work across both sites. Staff know what pupils have been taught and are able to effectively teach knowledge that they build on from early years to Year 4.

In lessons, most staff check whether pupils have remembered important information. They use this information to adapt their teaching and planning. This helps them to ensure that gaps in pupils' knowledge are closed. However, a few staff do not do this as effectively. This means that misunderstandings are sometimes missed. This slows pupils' progress.

The school works effectively with parents and specialists to get the right support for the most vulnerable pupils. Teachers skilfully adapt learning to support pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). This ensures that the curriculum focuses on the most important aspects of pupils' learning. Pupils with SEND make strong progress from their individual starting points.

The school prioritises the learning of reading and phonics. Staff teach a well-structured programme that ensures that pupils learn their sounds quickly. Children in

early years develop their vocabulary by learning to retell favourite stories. As a result, children are eager to write and to use their phonics knowledge. Teachers quickly notice pupils who do not know the sounds they need. Precise, small-group teaching ensures that these pupils catch up quickly.

The school has carefully considered the types of books to include in the curriculum. Teachers choose books to support pupils' personal development. For example, pupils read and listen to books that challenge stereotypes and explore diversity, as well as helping them to recognise their place in the world. Books such as 'My Skin, Your Skin' have been important in helping pupils understand differences.

In early years, staff work closely with the pre-school to ensure that they gain a clear understanding of the needs of children when they start. As a result, children engage in activities with purpose, settle quickly and make strong progress. They learn the attributes needed to behave and learn well.

The school ensures that pupils' well-being is at the heart of the curriculum. Pupils enjoy learning how to relax, for example through yoga sessions. The school's Nurture group helps pupils develop important social skills. Pupils learn to listen and take turns. They develop the confidence to talk about how they are feeling and about any concerns or worries they might have. In subjects such as art, pupils are encouraged to develop their creativity and share their feelings.

Staff are overwhelmingly positive about working at the school. They value leaders' support and consideration of their well-being and workload.

Governors visit the school and check leaders' actions to address the current school priorities. They have a broad understanding of the quality of education in English and mathematics. However, they are less clear about how well other curriculum subjects are taught and how well pupils are achieving in them.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Most adults use questioning to check what pupils know and to help pupils to extend their thinking to deepen their understanding. Some staff have not yet developed the skills to do this effectively. The school must continue to ensure that all staff have the expertise to use questioning effectively to support pupils' understanding so that they achieve as well as they can.
- Governors do not yet have a secure enough understanding of the quality of the curriculum in subjects other than English and mathematics. As a result, they are not able to assure themselves that pupils are learning what they should and

achieving well in foundation subjects. The school must ensure that governors gain a better understanding of the quality of the curriculum in all subjects, including how well pupils are achieving.

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

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| Unique reference number | 117422 |
| Local authority | Hertfordshire |
| Inspection number | 10287101 |
| Type of school | First |
| School category | Voluntary aided |
| Age range of pupils | 3 to 6 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number of pupils on the school roll | 33 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair of governing body | Amy Martin |
| Headteacher | Sharon Brown (Federation Executive Headteacher) |
| Website | www.barleybarkway.herts.sch.uk |
| Date of previous inspection | 22 February 2018, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 |

Information about this school

- The school received an inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005 in 2014, when it was graded as good overall. Its most recent inspection in 2018 confirmed that the school continued to be good.
- The school is part of the Diocese of St Albans. 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 2017. The next section 48 inspection will be within eight years.
- The school is part of a federation with Barley VA First School. The federation headteacher and the governing body lead both schools. Each school is registered separately with the Department for Education. Each school is inspected separately by Ofsted.
- In 2018, the school was restructured so that pupils are taught together in single year groups. Nursery, Reception and Year 1 pupils are taught on the Barkway school site. Older pupils are taught on the Barley site.
- Leaders do not currently use any alternative provision to meet the needs of the pupils.

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 and other senior leaders. The lead inspector met members of the local governing body and held a telephone meeting with a representative from the local authority.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, early reading, mathematics, science and art. 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. Inspectors also discussed the curriculum in some other subjects.
- 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 that puts pupils' interests first.
- Inspectors considered the views of parents through the responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire for parents, Ofsted Parent View. The lead inspector also considered an email from a parent.
- Inspectors considered the views of staff through meetings and informal discussions, and through their responses to Ofsted's online survey for staff.

Inspection team

Cindy Impey, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Lucy Roberts

Ofsted Inspector

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