

Inspection of Church Lench CofE First School

Main Street, Church Lench, Evesham, Worcestershire WR11 4UE

Inspection dates: 24 and 25 October 2023

Overall effectiveness	Good
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The quality of education	Good
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Behaviour and attitudes	Good
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Personal development	Good
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Leadership and management	Good
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Previous inspection grade	Outstanding
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This school was last inspected under section 5 of the Education Act 2005 11 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?

The school provides a nurturing and safe environment to enable pupils to grow and flourish. There is a strong focus on pupils' happiness and well-being. The small number of pupils in school means that adults know pupils very well. Pupils know that staff are always on hand to help them.

Parents and carers have overwhelmingly positive views of the school. They appreciate the wider opportunities and care that staff provide. One parent summed up the views of many by saying, 'This is a small school with a big heart.'

Pupils readily take on extra responsibility, such as being eco-councillors and members of the school worship committee. This helps build pupils' confidence and leadership skills. Pupils hugely enjoy the wide range of educational visits the school provides. These experiences help enrich pupils' knowledge of things they learn about and contribute to their personal development.

Pupils behave well in lessons and around school. Children learn to cooperate and support each other from the early years.

The school wants the best for pupils. It ensures that pupils receive good-quality pastoral care and individual attention in lessons when needed. However, on occasion, some pupils' work is not as accurate or well presented as it could be.

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

The school's curriculum captures pupils' interests and meets the needs of mixed-age teaching groups. It is well structured and progressive. Pupils build their knowledge and skills sequentially from Reception Year to Year 5. However, in a small number of subjects, there are inconsistencies in how well the curriculum is implemented, and in the quality of some pupils' work in books.

Systems to check how well pupils are doing in some subjects are still developing. The school has identified precisely what it wants pupils to know and be able to do and is now linking this to the curriculum. However, gaps in pupils' core knowledge in each subject are not always identified and addressed in order to prepare them for the next stage of their education.

The school has focused on some subjects and established robust systems to check their effectiveness. However, the impact of the curriculum in some subjects has not been evaluated. Teachers do not always have the opportunity to monitor some of the subject areas they are responsible for. This limits their ability to provide the support and improvements needed to strengthen the curriculum.

Reading is a strength of the school. Children get off to a strong start learning phonics in the early years. The school ensures that pupils read regularly in school and at home. Home reading books match the sounds and letters that pupils learn.

The school strongly promotes reading for pleasure. Effective support is provided for pupils who struggle to read. Teachers adapt tasks to meet their needs, and daily practice helps these pupils to catch up quickly.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities are identified quickly. These pupils access the same curriculum as their peers. Special resources and adult help ensure that pupils achieve well. Excellent use is made of visiting specialists, especially occupational therapists, to work with individual pupils and provide bespoke support.

Pupils behave well and attend school regularly. They work and play together well in class and at breaktimes. Good relationships in all classes ensure that learning is seldom disrupted.

The school places a strong emphasis on pupils' spiritual development. Pupils write their own services for church festivals. They have a good understanding about other faiths and about treating others equally. Their knowledge of fundamental British values is also well developed. Pupils know what these are and how they apply in school and later life.

Those responsible for governance are proactive in their roles and well informed. They make a significant contribution to school improvement, for example helping pupils achieve 'Eco-School' status and funding to become 'courageous advocates'. Governors hold staff to account well but are equally protective of staff's workload and well-being. All staff are proud to work at the school and feel valued and well supported.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The implementation of the curriculum in a small number of subjects is not consistently strong across the school and, on occasion, expectations are not high enough. As a result, some pupils' work is not as accurate, or well presented, as it could be. The school should ensure that all staff are supported effectively to deliver the curriculum as intended and that expectations remain consistently high in all classes.
- The school has yet to finalise an approach to assessing how well pupils achieve in the foundation subjects. This means that staff are unclear where gaps in pupils' learning exist and so do not address them. The school should ensure that staff know how well pupils understand and retain what they learn as they move through the school.

- Some staff do not yet have the expertise to precisely evaluate the strengths and weaknesses in their curriculum areas. As a result, they are not always able to support colleagues or make the necessary improvements. The school should ensure that subject leaders have the skills needed to monitor their respective subjects and make improvements where needed.

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	116792
Local authority	Worcestershire
Inspection number	10294520
Type of school	First
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	4 to 10
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	70
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Derek Ferguson
Headteacher	Samantha Price
Website	www.churchlench.worcs.sch.uk
Dates of previous inspection	10 and 11 July 2012, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The headteacher was appointed in September 2016.
- The school is part of the Diocese of Worcester.
- The school's last section 48 inspection was in September 2017. The school's next section 48 inspection will be in the 2024/25 academic year.
- No separate judgement was made about the effectiveness of early years provision because there were only a very small number of children in Reception Year at the time of this inspection.
- The school does not use any alternative provision.

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 the assistant headteacher. A meeting was also held with members of the governing body, including the chair of governors, and a representative from the local authority.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: reading, mathematics, history and science. 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.
- Inspectors considered a range of documents, including the school's self-evaluation and improvement plans. Minutes of governing body meetings and reports from external reviews were also scrutinised.
- Inspectors looked at records of attendance and behaviour. They observed pupils' behaviour in lessons and around school and talked to them informally about behaviour, bullying and welfare.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspectors: checked the school's single central record; spoke to the school about safeguarding procedures; took account of the views of 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 talked to parents at the start of the school day and considered the responses to Ofsted's online survey, Ofsted Parent View, including the free-text responses. They also reviewed the responses to the staff and pupil surveys and gathered the views of these groups through discussion.

Inspection team

Heather Simpson, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Claire McNeill

Ofsted Inspector

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