

Inspection of John Donne Church of England Primary School

High Street, Blunham, Bedford, Bedfordshire MK44 3NL

Inspection dates: 28 and 29 November 2023

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

The quality of education

Requires improvement

Behaviour and attitudes

Requires improvement

Personal development

Requires improvement

Leadership and management

Requires improvement

Early years provision

Requires improvement

Previous inspection grade

Good

What is it like to attend this school?

The school is a friendly and positive environment, where staff listen to pupils. Pupils feel safe and enjoy coming to school. They speak positively about the staff who take care of them.

Pupils' behaviour has improved over the past year. Staff have higher expectations of pupils' behaviour. However, this is not consistent and not all silliness is being addressed. Pupils enjoy, and are motivated by, the positive rewards and praise they receive for behaving well.

Pupils know that adults have high expectations of how well they learn. They can recall more recent learning as well as demonstrate understanding of subject specific vocabulary. Pupils enjoy being challenged. Current pupils are making more progress across the curriculum. However, in the past, pupils have not achieved as well as they should have by the end of Year 6.

Pupils are starting to attend well-thought-through trips. These link to the curriculum and extend pupils' learning. They are proud to participate in local community events, for example, the Rose Queen Fete and the switching on of the Christmas tree lights.

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

The school has experienced changes in leadership and staffing over the past few years. It is now in a more stable position as it has made links with another local primary school. These links have ensured that there is a clear vision for the school that everyone is working towards.

The school offers a broad curriculum. The curriculum ensures that pupils' knowledge builds over time, starting in the early years. However, the curriculum is new. There are gaps in pupils' knowledge that need to be filled prior to learning the new curriculum. There are also long gaps between when pupils learn some subjects. These mean that pupils struggle to remember important subject knowledge. Pupils do not achieve as well as they should in these subjects. Teachers sometimes use questions skilfully to draw out and deepen pupils' understanding. However, there are occasions where teachers do not spot and address pupils' misconceptions, meaning that pupils' understanding is inconsistent.

Staff are working more effectively to meet the needs of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Identification of need is more accurate, starting in the early years, which is enabling the school to put in suitable adaptations where they are needed. Staff are communicating with parents in a more effective way so that everyone is aware of what is in place for pupils with SEND. This has not always been the case. The adaptations and clear communications now in place are helping pupils with SEND to learn well.

Reading is prioritised throughout the school. Phonics is taught effectively. Staff use their regular checks on pupils' phonics knowledge to spot when someone needs extra help. This enables pupils to keep up. Pupils can read fluently as books are matched accurately to their reading ability. Pupils have access to a wide range of texts in the class and school library, which ensures they will find a text that they enjoy reading.

The school has introduced a new behaviour policy. This policy has already seen improvements with how behaviour is dealt with and managed throughout the school. However, this is not being applied consistently. A few pupils are not able to concentrate on their learning due to others' silliness in lessons. Also, a few pupils demonstrate some lower levels of conduct, for example, not lining up as expected. However, the school is seeing a reduction in behaviour incidents as it manages the underlying causes of misbehaviour.

Pupils learn how to stay healthy. They learn about how people are different and about healthy relationships in an age-appropriate way. The school ensures that the books pupils read develop their understanding of different cultures. As a result, pupils are very understanding of everyone's differences. However, opportunities for pupils to explore and develop their talents and interests through clubs and activities are limited.

There have been recent changes in the governing body. Governors have the expertise and knowledge to support and challenge leaders effectively. This ensures that the school is making positive changes that are improving the quality of provision. Staff appreciate that their well-being is considered when new initiatives are introduced.

Parents are positive and supportive of the school, especially the work that has taken place over the past year. They acknowledge the improvements in communication more recently, which they value.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In some subjects, the curriculum is new and, therefore, does not build on previous knowledge. Teachers do not always address misconceptions appropriately. Pupils are unable to build their knowledge sequentially as they have gaps and misconceptions in their learning. The school needs to ensure that all curriculum planning considers pupils' prior learning so that this can be built on. The school should ensure that the curriculum is delivered as intended.

- The new behaviour policy is not being applied consistently. There are low-level behaviours that are not being addressed that impact on pupils' learning. The school should ensure that all staff and pupils are clear about the expectations for behaviour and ensure that the behaviour policy is applied consistently.
- Pupils have limited opportunities outside of the curriculum to develop their talents and interests. Therefore, pupils do not experience a broad range of activities to see what additional skills they might develop. The school should ensure that pupils can experience a range of activities so that they can develop their skills.

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 | 109615 |
| Local authority | Central Bedfordshire |
| Inspection number | 10255012 |
| Type of school | Primary |
| School category | Voluntary aided |
| Age range of pupils | 3 to 11 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number of pupils on the school roll | 120 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair of governing body | Diane Osborne |
| Headteacher | Anita Whitehurst (Executive Headteacher) |
| Website | www.johndonne.org.uk |
| Date of previous inspection | 9 February 2022, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 |

Information about this school

- The school has an informal partnership with St Swithun's Church of England VC Primary School. They share an executive headteacher and a head of school who started at John Donne Primary School in September 2022.
- The school has a Christian religious character. The school's most recent inspection of its denominational education, under section 48 of the Education Act 2005, took place in March 2017. The school's next section 48 inspection will be within eight years.
- The school does not use any alternative providers.
- The school operates and manages an after-school club.

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 educational provision.
- Inspectors discussed any continued impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- The lead inspector spoke with the executive headteacher, the head of school, governors, a representative of the Diocese of St Alban's and a representative from the local authority.
- The inspectors carried out deep dives in early reading, mathematics and geography. 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 work.
- 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. They also considered 25 responses to Ofsted's pupil survey.
- Inspectors spoke to groups of staff, to gather their views of the school. Inspectors also considered 15 responses to Ofsted's staff survey.
- The inspectors considered the 21 responses and free-text comments submitted to Ofsted's online survey, Ofsted Parent View. The lead inspector spoke to parents at the school gate.

Inspection team

Katie Devenport, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Charlie Fordham

His Majesty's Inspector

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