

Inspection of Gillingham St Michael's Church of England Primary Academy

The Boundaries, Geldeston Road, Gillingham, Beccles, Suffolk NR34 0HT

Inspection dates: 5 and 6 March 2024

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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Early years provision	Good
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Previous inspection grade	Good
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The headteacher of this school is Heather Brand. This school is part of Diocese of Norwich Education and Academies Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer (CEO), Oliver Burwood, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by William Crawshay. There is also an academies group executive principal, Rachael Judd, who is responsible for this school and 10 others.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils enjoy coming to school. They look forward to activities such as professional pizza making and singing joyfully in assemblies.

Everyone is friendly and supportive. Pupils include each other in their play at breaktime and lunchtime. 'Playground buddies' help to support this effectively. Pupils trust that they can share any worries with teachers. They know that the adults will help them resolve these. This all helps pupils to be happy and safe.

Pupils achieve well. There are high expectations about what they should learn. Staff provide the support pupils need to realise these expectations. For example, pupils who need it get additional support with reading in the afternoon. However, on occasions, planned learning does not capture pupils' interest well enough, so they do not build knowledge as well as they might.

Pupils learn about tolerance and respect in personal, social and health education (PSHE). They apply what they learn and are accepting of each other's differences.

Pupils value the broad range of enrichment opportunities. They compete in sporting and science competitions against other schools and have won awards for their sportsmanship. They have meaningful opportunities to develop their leadership and teamwork skills through the student council and house captain roles.

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

The school has ensured that the curriculum caters well for mixed-age group teaching. Leaders have carefully planned what pupils should learn. From early years, the curriculum builds and connects pupils' knowledge effectively over time. For example, in early years children learn about the local area. Older pupils build on this by exploring a case study of the wider area of Dunwich, which includes visiting the museum there. Pupils use what they have already learned to develop key historical skills, for example comparing modern-day Dunwich with medieval times. This connected and gradual approach enables pupils to achieve well across the curriculum.

Teachers are knowledgeable and provide clear explanations that equip pupils with the understanding they need. For example, in mathematics, teachers model the methods pupils need to solve problems successfully. Occasionally, the learning activities staff plan do not grasp and build on pupils' interests. Staff do not always check how well these activities are working. This leads to some pupils losing focus or becoming distracted because some activities are not well enough matched to their needs. As a result, some pupils do not secure important knowledge as well as they should.

The school carefully identifies how the needs of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities can best be met. For example, where pupils have speech,

communication and language needs, teachers make well-considered adaptations to the curriculum so these pupils can successfully learn to read using phonics.

Reading is prioritised right from early years. The teaching of early reading through phonics is well embedded. Staff skilfully support pupils to decode and blend words. The books pupils read match the sounds they are learning. Any pupils who need extra support get the help they need. Older pupils read regularly and are well supported to develop their comprehension skills. This all means that pupils learn to read with confidence and have a passion for books.

Pupils behave respectfully. In early years, pupils learn routines, such as sharing, taking turns and learning to listen when on the carpet. Older pupils are polite. They understand and respect each other's differences. As a result, there are no issues of bullying or discriminatory behaviour. The school takes effective action to support pupils to attend well.

The school has ensured that pupils' personal development is promoted well. Pupils learn about what is right and wrong. They learn about the beliefs and cultures of others. Music and singing play a big part in pupils happily coming together as a one-school community. Barriers to participation in enrichment opportunities have been removed. This ensures that all pupils benefit. These opportunities include residential trips that help to develop the increased independence pupils need as they prepare for secondary education.

The trust has ensured that its systems for governance and school improvement all connect. This means that the school is challenged and supported effectively. The school works together with other smaller schools in the trust. This provides staff with many opportunities to collaborate, develop professionally and share practice, which they value highly. This also supports their workload and well-being, of which leaders are continually mindful.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Teachers sometimes plan activities that are less effective at grasping and building on pupils' interests. Where this is the case, pupils can lose focus on activities because staff do not check well enough how effectively these activities are supporting their learning. As a result, some pupils do not secure important knowledge as well as they might. The school needs to ensure that staff receive further training to address this so that all learning engages pupils and that they retain and secure important knowledge consistently well.

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	141778
Local authority	Norfolk
Inspection number	10295078
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	60
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	William Crawshay
CEO of the trust	Oliver Burwood
Headteacher	Heather Brand
Website	www.gillingham.dneat.org
Date of previous inspection	27 February 2018, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school is part the Kingfisher Federation. This is a group of small schools within the Diocese of Norwich Education and Academies Trust. The headteacher is also the executive headteacher of this federation of three schools. The three schools share a single local governing body.
- The school is not currently using any form of alternative provision.
- The school has a religious character as a Church of England voluntary-controlled school. The most recent inspection of its denominational education and worship, under section 48 of the Education Act 2005, was in May 2023. The next section 48 inspection will take place within five 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.
- An inspector met with the CEO and the deputy CEO of the trust, the trust academies group executive principal and the chair of governors to discuss the role of the trust and governance.
- Inspectors met with the headteacher, the special educational needs coordinator, the designated safeguarding lead, the early years lead, the attendance lead, the personal development lead, school curriculum leaders and staff.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics, and music. 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 spent time in early years on both days of the inspection.
- Inspectors also considered the curriculum in some other subjects, including science, history and PSHE.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour in lessons, around school and at social times.
- 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 considered responses to Ofsted's pupil survey and Ofsted's staff survey. They considered responses to the parent survey, Ofsted Parent View, including free-text messages.

Inspection team

James Chester, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Imran Khan

Ofsted Inspector

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