

Inspection of a good school: Benson Church of England Primary School

Oxford Road, Benson, Wallingford, Oxfordshire OX10 6LX

Inspection dates:

13 and 14 March 2024

Outcome

There has been no change to this school's overall judgement of good as a result of this ungraded (section 8) inspection. However, the evidence gathered suggests that the inspection grade might not be as high if a graded (section 5) inspection were carried out now. The school's next inspection will be a graded inspection.

The headteacher of this school is Amy Pearce. This school is part of the Oxford Diocesan Schools 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), Anne Dellar, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Kathy Winrow.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are happy and safe. Strong relationships between adults and pupils are evident across the school. Pupils are kind to one another, and adults care for them well.

The school expects pupils to work hard and behave well. There is no bullying. Very occasionally disagreements or unkind behaviour happen, but pupils know that the adults always help them sort such things out when they occur. Pupils take pride in their school and in the leadership opportunities they are given, such as being elected as school councillors and the important roles of house captains and head boy and girl.

The school has experienced some recent changes. The number of pupils attending the school is growing and there has been a change in leadership. The school identified that there were changes that needed to be made. Staff have tackled the most important things that needed to be done first, focusing on pupils' behaviour and safeguarding.

The school is ambitious for its pupils. Staff have started work on the curriculum they want pupils to learn. There is a broad curriculum in place. However, the design of the curriculum is not strong enough yet. The key knowledge and concepts that all pupils should learn are not precisely set out in every subject. In some subjects, sometimes this means that pupils do not develop enough specialist knowledge. Therefore, they are not prepared for the next stages of learning strongly enough.

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

The school prioritises the teaching of reading and mathematics. Changes to the library, the introduction of 'reading ambassadors' and author visits encourage pupils to develop a love of reading. Recent changes in mathematics, such as the 'Tough Ten' and regular practice of multiplication tables, help pupils to build fluency with number. There is, however, still important work to be done. Not all adults have sufficient expertise in the teaching of mathematics or early reading. The books pupils read do not always match the sounds they are learning. Additional support is not well thought through, which means pupils who fall behind do not catch up quickly. Too many pupils in Year 1 are not learning to read well enough.

In early years, opportunities to secure or deepen children's understanding are maximised. Adults encourage high-quality discussions to extend children's use of language. Children get off to a good start in learning about numbers and patterns in mathematics. They confidently join in with counting songs, ordering numbers and looking for patterns when talking about the weather. In older year groups, pupils have some gaps in their mathematical knowledge that have not been identified specifically enough. This means that sometimes pupils find it hard to connect new learning to what they have learned before.

In other subjects, the school is in the early stages of breaking down the content of the curriculum into the key building blocks pupils should learn. As a result, the school has not fully identified how knowledge and skills should build up in these subjects over time.

Teachers and teaching assistants are developing their skills in adapting teaching to meet the needs of all pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). The school ensures that there are effective opportunities in place to support pupils with SEND. As a result, most are able to learn alongside their peers successfully. Teachers often check what pupils have and have not understood in lessons. However, this is not consistently effective in all subjects. Consequently, teachers are not able to adapt subsequent learning in order to ensure all pupils achieve as well as they should.

Pupils have positive attitudes towards their learning. They enjoy school, and the vast majority attend regularly. The updates to the school's approach to behaviour management have led to significant improvements in pupils' positive attitudes to learning. All staff follow the expectations laid out in the new policy, 'Five to Thrive', which stipulates the high expectations that most pupils rise to. Pupils know to be kind, caring and tolerant towards each other.

The school thinks carefully about pupils' personal development. For example, pupils learn how to recognise different emotions and how to be reflective. They are supported in understanding the importance of making responsible decisions in their lives in relation to health and keeping safe. Most recently, pupils have enjoyed taking part in and sharing an environmental project with the local community.

Staff, including those who are early in their career, feel well supported by the school. They have noted the recent positive changes in this area. They feel the school is considerate of

their well-being so that they can focus fully on their teaching.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The support that some pupils who are at the earliest stages of learning to read receive is not fully effective. This means that these pupils do not overcome gaps in their phonics knowledge. This limits their ability to read fluently. The school should ensure that the strategies to help those pupils who struggle to read enable them to catch up with learning phonics.
- The school has not made sure that all staff have had the appropriate training on subject-specific knowledge and teaching expertise in mathematics. As a result, there is an inconsistent approach to the teaching of mathematics, which means some pupils have unidentified gaps in their knowledge. The school should continue to provide the training that staff need to develop sufficient expertise in teaching mathematics.
- Assessment is not yet effective across all subjects. As a result, staff do not always know how much knowledge pupils have remembered over time in these subjects or routinely use this information to inform the next steps of teaching. The school needs to ensure that all subjects have a systematic approach to assessment so that pupils have a clear understanding of their next steps and that teachers can make precise adaptations to support all pupils to achieve well.
- The school has not identified the key knowledge that pupils should know and remember in several subjects fully enough. This means that teachers are unclear about what pupils should learn. Consequently, pupils do not build a secure depth of knowledge and understanding in these subjects. The school should ensure that it clearly defines the key content pupils need to know in all subjects.

Background

When we have judged a school to be good, we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains good. This is called an ungraded inspection, and it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on an ungraded inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school would now receive a higher or lower grade, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection, which is carried out under section 5 of the Act. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the ungraded inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the ungraded inspection a graded inspection immediately.

This is the second ungraded inspection since we judged the predecessor school, Benson Church of England Primary School, to be good in February 2015.

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	147507
Local authority	Oxfordshire
Inspection number	10296457
Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	298
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Kathy Winrow
CEO of the trust	Anne Dellar
Headteacher	Amy Pearce
Website	www.bensoncofeprimary.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- The school is part of the Oxford Diocesan Schools Trust.
- The headteacher has been in post since September 2023.
- Since the last inspection, the school roll has significantly increased.
- The school has some mixed-age classes. This arrangement consists of three mixed Year 1 and 2 classes and three mixed Year 3 and 4 classes.
- The school has a Nursery for three- and four-year-olds.
- The school does not currently use any alternative provision.
- The school is a Church of England school and is part of the Diocese of Oxford. The last section 48 inspection was in May 2023.

Information about this inspection

- 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. The inspector discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and has taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- The inspector met with the senior leadership team, members of staff and two members of the governing body.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspector 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 inspector considered the responses to the online survey, Ofsted Parent View, and parents' written comments.
- The inspector carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics and geography. For each deep dive, the inspector met leaders, looked at curriculum plans, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to adults in the school and spoke to pupils about their learning.
- The inspector also looked at pupils' work and curriculum plans and spoke to leaders and pupils about some other subjects.
- The inspector gathered evidence to explore the impact of pupils' behaviour and the school's wider curriculum.
- The inspector looked at the school's own evaluation and development plans.
- The inspector took into account the views of staff during meetings with them and from the responses to Ofsted's staff survey.
- The inspector also met with the chair of the trust, the CEO and members of the local governing board and spoke to a representative of the diocese.

Inspection team

Clare Haines, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for children looked after, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

This publication is available at <http://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/>.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.gov.uk/ofsted

© Crown copyright 2024