

Inspection of St Laurence In Thanet Church of England Junior Academy

Newington Road, Ramsgate, Kent CT11 0QX

Inspection dates: 19 and 20 March 2024

Overall effectiveness	Good
The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Outstanding
Leadership and management	Good
Previous inspection grade	Good

The headteacher of this school is Sarah Graham. This school is part of Aquila, The Diocese of Canterbury 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), Annie Wiles, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Sue Butterworth.

What is it like to attend this school?

Most pupils are positive and proud of their school. They aspire to live up to its Christian values. They know what is expected of them and generally behave responsibly. When they struggle to live up to the high expectations of staff, they are supported well and given positive strategies to cope when they find things difficult. Pupils think that behaviour has improved recently. Pupils say that new systems to help them reflect on poor decision-making are working. One told the lead inspector, 'There are always consequences for your actions'. Others readily agreed.

Pupils who talked to inspectors reported that they feel safe here. They also said friendships are strong. Pupils are supportive of others. They have a clear and respectful understanding of the barriers some of their peers face, especially those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND).

The school is on a journey to reverse the previously weak published outcomes and current pupils' achievements are stronger. They show increasingly positive attitudes to learning because staff expect lots. Pupils also enjoy the additional responsibilities they can take on, including as members of the school council or as worship shepherds. They value greatly the opportunities they get to come together as a community to sing, enjoying the sense of 'togetherness' and 'unity' that these bring.

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

This is a good school on a rapidly improving trajectory. Much has been achieved in a relatively short period of time as a new leadership team has become established over the last two years. The legacy of Covid-19 and of previous inconsistency in implementing the school's curriculum is diminishing. The contribution of the multi-academy trust and those in positions of governance has been significant in supporting leaders at all levels to improve the school.

Work to improve outcomes for pupils has a high priority. Large-scale changes in the way mathematics is taught and how pupils who struggle to read are supported are proving effective. The significance of this work is clear to see during visits to classrooms. It is impacting positively on the wider curriculum. It is also helping to build the confidence and resilience of pupils, the large majority of whom come from disadvantaged backgrounds. Despite the improving picture, more still needs to be done to ensure that this work translates positively into pupils' achievements.

The school's curriculum has appropriate breadth. Leaders know that the school's headline results in national tests and assessments need to be better. However, they have held their nerve to ensure that pupils continue to experience a full range of curriculum subjects. Pupils enjoy their physical education (PE) sessions and the opportunities the school provides to compete against other schools in team sports. Computing is popular. Pupils talk excitedly about their work incorporating a range of technology. One inspector's visit to a classroom was marked by an animated

discussion about whether or not fish have ears. This was a serious yet perplexing question, linked to the use of branching databases.

The school's provision to support the personal development of pupils is strong. This does not happen by happy coincidence. Much of this work is based on the reality of pupils' everyday lives and mitigates the challenges they face outside of school.

The school has a clear overview of how and when pupils will learn about other faiths and cultures. A strong Christian ethos underpins all aspects of the school, which is outward looking in its work to prepare pupils for life in modern Britain. Year 6 visited a local synagogue during the inspection. Age-appropriate relationships and sex education is delivered sensitively and carefully personalised when needed.

Pupils with SEND are supported well in classrooms. One highlight of the inspection was the quality and sheer volume of the work of teaching assistants and the pastoral team to support disadvantaged pupils. Another was the detailed and deliberate approach to assessing need and providing support for pupils' mental health, which often impacts negatively on their attendance. Staff are not afraid to change course when their strategies are not working around attendance. As a result, there are a number of success stories to celebrate as persistent and severe absence reduces over time.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Pupils' outcomes in national test and assessment results at the end of Year 6 have not been strong enough in the recent past. This has meant that pupils were not as well prepared academically as they might be when moving on to secondary education. This was especially the case with mathematics and reading. Current pupils are making stronger progress than has been the case in the past. However, the school now needs to consolidate its work to improve the quality of education further, as well as continuing to raise expectations of what pupils can achieve. This will mean that pupils will make better progress through the curriculum and will be better prepared for their next steps in education.
- Some pupils do not attend school as often as they should. Levels of persistent absence, though falling, are too high. This means that some pupils are not achieving as well as they might. The school should redouble its efforts to reduce absence, so that pupils' attendance improves and they benefit more fully from the improving quality of education the school provides.

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	138592
Local authority	Kent
Inspection number	10296377
Type of school	Junior
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	7 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	156
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Sue Butterworth
CEO of trust	Annie Wiles
Headteacher	Sarah Graham
Website	www.stlaurencejuniors.co.uk/
Dates of previous inspection	3 and 4 July 2018, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school is part of Aquila, The Diocese of Canterbury Academies Trust. A local governing body provides aspects of governance for the school as defined in a scheme of delegation.
- St Laurence In Thanet Church of England Junior Academy joined Aquila, The Diocese of Canterbury Academies Trust as a sponsored academy in May 2022, having previously been a stand-alone academy.
- When the academy was last inspected by Ofsted, it was judged to be good overall.
- There have been a number of changes to the senior leadership team of the school within the last two years, including the appointment of a new headteacher, deputy headteacher, and special educational needs coordinator.
- The school currently uses one registered 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 had 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 held a wide range of meetings with leaders at all levels, as well as teaching and support staff. The lead inspector met with the chair of the local governing body accompanied by one other governor. He also met with the CEO of the multi-academy trust and talked to a representative of The Diocese of Canterbury on the telephone.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: reading, mathematics, computing and PE. 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. The lead inspector heard some pupils read to a known adult. Inspectors also discussed the curriculum in some other subjects with leaders.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, inspectors: reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of parents, 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 evidence to explore the impact of pupils' behaviour, the school's wider curriculum offer and how leaders support staff with their workload.
- Pupils were talked to throughout the inspection to gain their views about the school.
- Inspectors considered the views of parents submitted through Ofsted Parent View. The views of pupils and staff were also considered through Ofsted's surveys.

Inspection team

Clive Close, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Catherine Cottingham

Ofsted Inspector

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