Inspection of Churchgate Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School, Harlow

Hobbs Cross Road, Harlow, Essex CM17 0LB

Inspection dates: 22 and 23 May 2024

Overall effectiveness	**Good**
The quality of education	**Good**
Behaviour and attitudes	**Good**
Personal development	**Good**
Leadership and management	**Good**
Early years provision	**Good**
Previous inspection grade	Good

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils enjoy learning and are safe at Churchgate. Adults and pupils make sure that everyone feels welcome, respected and valued. Pupils are confident that the adults will listen to their concerns and look after them well.

The school has high expectations of pupils' learning and behaviour. Pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), rise to these expectations. Pupils diligently follow the school rules of 'be respectful, be ready, be safe'.

Pupils have a well-developed understanding of bullying in all its forms. They insist it does not happen here. Pupils know that adults will sort out any friendship issues that might arise. Pupils are taught to treat others as they would like to be treated themselves.

Pupils value the positions of responsibility they hold. For example, pupils are voted onto the school council and the worship team. As a result, they have a solid understanding of democracy. These roles help pupils to develop confidence and leadership skills. Pupils relish the opportunity to develop their talents and interests through a range of clubs, such as choir and gardening. They would like even more of these.

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

The school's curriculum is ambitious. It sets out clearly what pupils need to learn in each subject, at each stage of their education. Following the COVID-19 pandemic, the school implemented a new curriculum to address gaps in pupils' learning. This has had a positive impact on pupils' achievement, especially in reading and mathematics. However, pupils do not get enough high-quality opportunities across the curriculum to improve their writing. At times, pupils' writing lacks the depth and quality needed to show their understanding.

Pupils benefit from their teachers' secure knowledge of the subjects they teach. Teachers carefully choose activities which help pupils to learn well. They receive advice and support from subject leaders to help them to deliver the curriculum effectively. Teachers regularly revisit learning, so that pupils remember it. This helps pupils build on their knowledge when they are introduced to something new. However, the school's assessment systems are new and are not yet fully embedded within everyday practice. Therefore, in some subjects, teachers do not always know what knowledge pupils have remembered. This means that there are some gaps in pupils' understanding of what has been taught before.

The school has made reading a top priority. Leaders have thought carefully about the books, stories and nursery rhymes that they want pupils to know and love, starting from the Reception Year. Pupils show a love of reading. They can identify their favourite authors. Children start learning to read as soon as they start in the

Reception Year. Staff are well trained in the school's approach to early reading. They ensure that pupils' errors and misconceptions are corrected quickly. Pupils enjoy taking home reading books that help them to practise their reading.

The nature and culture of the school mean that staff care deeply and know the needs of all pupils, including pupils with SEND. Pupils with SEND work alongside their peers. Where necessary, the curriculum is effectively adapted for them to ensure they learn well.

There is a calm and purposeful atmosphere around the school. Children are taught the importance of good behaviour from the moment they start in the Reception Year. They learn to follow routines, develop their independence and become a good friend. Pupils are adamant that any form of discrimination is not tolerated. They show empathy.

The school prioritises working with pupils, families and external agencies to promote good attendance. As a result, attendance has started to improve. However, too many pupils have high levels of absence. They miss important learning and the wider opportunities for development that the school offers.

Through the wider curriculum, pupils learn how to keep themselves safe, including online. They learn to value diversity, for example, by respecting other people's religious beliefs and other differences. The school works closely with the local church. Pupils talk with pride about how they raise money for local charities.

Staff are proud to work at the school. They appreciate the consideration that leaders give to their workload and well-being. Staff work collaboratively and provide support to other colleagues. Support from the local authority has been integral to the way the school has improved. The members of the governing body know the school well. They provide appropriate support and challenge to leaders.

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, assessment systems are still relatively new and are not yet embedded within everyday practice. They do not help teachers understand which knowledge and skills pupils have not understood. As a result, gaps in pupils' learning are not addressed and pupils do not build their knowledge as successfully as they should. The school should ensure that it refines its assessment systems so that it provides greater clarity for teachers, enabling pupils to remember more of what has been taught.

- Pupils do not get enough opportunities to develop and practise their writing skills across the curriculum. As a result, pupils' writing can lack depth and the quality of pupils' writing is variable. The school should ensure that pupils have opportunities to develop and practise their writing skills so that their writing is of a consistently high quality across the curriculum.
- Too many pupils are too frequently absent from school. As a result, they miss important learning and opportunities for personal development. The school should continue to strengthen its strategies to improve attendance so that all pupils benefit fully from the education and experiences that 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 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	115170
Local authority	Essex
Inspection number	10345151
Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	195
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Mark Adams
Headteacher	Jonathan Tye
Website	www.churchgate.essex.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	28 February 2019, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- This is a voluntary-aided school in the Diocese of Chelmsford. The last section 48 inspection, for schools of a religious character, took place in July 2023. The next is due in 2028.
- The school uses one registered alternative provision.
- The school runs its own breakfast and 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 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.

- 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 had discussions with the headteacher and other members of the leadership team.
- An inspector held a meeting with the governing body, including the chair.
- An inspector had a discussion with representatives of the local authority.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in early reading, mathematics, history and science. As part of this process, they had discussions with subject leaders, visited lessons, had discussions with pupils, listened to pupils reading and looked at their work in books. They also scrutinised the curriculum in other subject areas.
- An inspector had a discussion with the special educational needs coordinator to help evaluate provision and practice for pupils with SEND.
- Inspectors had discussions with groups of pupils about their experience of school. They also observed pupils' behaviour in lessons and at social times.
- The inspectors considered responses to Ofsted's online surveys for parents and staff.

Inspection team

Joseph Figg, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Danny Wagstaff	Ofsted Inspector

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