

Inspection of Hormead Church of England (VA) First School

Great Hormead, Buntingford, Hertfordshire SG9 0NR

Inspection dates: 23 and 24 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 are safe and happy at this warm and welcoming school. They enjoy learning in this countryside setting and appreciate the magnificent views of fields surrounding their school. They are proud of their school community.

The school has high expectations for what pupils can achieve. This includes pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Adults adapt learning well to support pupils during lessons. This means that pupils with SEND can learn alongside their peers in class.

Pupils demonstrate their core Christian values, including love, courage, resilience, honesty and cooperation. Unkind behaviour is rare. Concerns are followed up quickly. Pupils show great care for each other.

Pupils play respectfully together at play and lunchtimes. Older pupils are role models for their younger friends. Positive relationships and friendships are important here. Pupils are quick to spot others using the 'Buddy Bench'. This is where pupils go if they want someone to play with. Some pupils have additional responsibilities, such as digital leaders or worship councillors.

Pupils experience a wide range of activities. The school carefully plans these to support pupils' wider development. For example, older pupils challenge themselves with adventurous activities on their residential visit. Pupils know the importance of healthy eating and exercise.

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

The school has expanded its nursery provision to include two-year-olds. Leaders have carefully considered how to organise the curriculum to meet the needs of these children. The school has focused on revising aspects of its curriculum. This includes a sharp focus on early reading. Staff lead subjects well. They have a secure understanding of how well pupils learn the curriculum. The school has clearly set out the knowledge pupils need in each subject in a logical order. This supports pupils to build their knowledge well. However, some curriculum plans are very new and teachers are still getting used to delivering them. The school has not had enough time to evaluate these recent changes and consequently leaders do not yet know what impact they are having on pupils' learning.

Staff are confident about the subjects they teach. They present information clearly. Staff regularly check pupils' understanding. Teachers ensure that new learning builds on what pupils already know. Any gaps in learning are quickly picked up and addressed. This helps pupils make good progress. The school quickly and accurately identifies the needs of pupils with SEND. Adults ensure that pupils with SEND are well supported in lessons. This includes children in the early years. Pupils with complex needs are further supported with specific interventions which address their needs well. Consequently, pupils are ready for their next stages of learning.

The school ensures that reading is a top priority. Nursery children experience a wide range of songs, stories and rhymes. Children in Reception learn to read from the very start. Adults make careful checks on how well pupils are reading. They quickly spot any pupils who are not keeping up with the school's reading programme and give them timely support. Pupils read often and widely. A love of reading permeates the school community. For example, pupils regularly visit the welcoming and well-resourced school library to choose books or to read quietly. Pupils enjoy being read to for pleasure by their teachers. Consequently, most pupils learn to read fluently and accurately over time.

Pupils behave well across the whole school. Staff have high expectations of pupils' behaviour. Pupils rise to these expectations and try hard to be polite and courteous. Pupils are typically attentive and keen to learn. If a pupil loses focus, teachers deal with it effectively. Children in the early years quickly learn the routines. Relationships between staff and pupils are extremely positive and respectful. Pupils who may need additional help with their behaviour are supported effectively by well-trained adults. This ensures that there is no disruption to learning.

Leaders remind families about the importance of attending school regularly. Nevertheless, for some pupils, attendance is too low. These pupils miss valuable learning and fall behind.

Older pupils are able to talk about their knowledge of different communities, faiths and religions. Pupils understand about British values such as tolerance, democracy and the rule of law. They warmly welcome new friends from around the world, including those seeking refuge here. Pupils actively participate in school life, including seeking election as house captains or members of the eco-council. The numerous sporting competitions include accessible sports such as boccia. Pupils are well prepared for life in modern Britain.

Governors know the school and the community well. They work strategically to provide clear direction, challenge and support to school leaders. Staff value how new approaches to marking have had a positive impact on their workload. They say that these support their well-being and help them to focus on their key responsibilities.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The school has recently introduced a new curriculum in a small number of subjects. Teachers are delivering these new approaches for the first time. They are still getting used to some of the new subject knowledge and how best to deliver it. Leaders should ensure teachers are trained in the best approaches to

deliver this new learning and leaders and governors should fully evaluate the impact of these changes on pupils' learning.

- A small group of pupils miss too much time in school. This has a negative impact on their learning. These pupils also miss out on the opportunities for well-being and personal development provided by the school. The school should strengthen its efforts to secure the regular attendance of all pupils.

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	117439
Local authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	10323646
Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	2 to 9
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	120
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Michael Johnson
Headteacher	Lynda Cowler
Website	www.hormead.herts.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	30 January 2019, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school does not use any off-site providers of alternative education.
- The school has a before-school and after-school childcare provision on site, run by the school.
- Hormead Church of England (VA) First School is part of the Diocese of St Albans. A Statutory inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) took place on 18 May 2017.

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.

- Inspectors met with the headteacher, senior leaders, members of the governing board, including the chair, subject leaders, teachers and pupils. They also talked informally with parents and carers.
- The lead inspector talked on the phone to representatives of the local authority and the diocese.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in early reading, mathematics, physical education, and art and design. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed 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 observed pupils reading to a familiar adult.
- Inspectors spoke to groups of pupils formally and informally about their learning and experiences at school.
- Inspectors observed informal times to evaluate safeguarding and pupils' behaviour.
- 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 the online questionnaire, Ofsted Parent View, including the free-text comments.
- Inspectors looked at a range of documentation provided by the school. This included the school's self-evaluation, school policies, curriculum documents and development plans.

Inspection team

Nick Rudman, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Neil Taggart

Ofsted Inspector

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