

# Inspection of St Columba CE Primary School

Tewkesbury Avenue, Fareham, Hampshire PO15 6LL

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Inspection dates: 4 and 5 June 2024

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>Good</b>
The quality of education	<b>Good</b>
Behaviour and attitudes	<b>Good</b>
Personal development	<b>Good</b>
Leadership and management	<b>Good</b>
Early years provision	<b>Good</b>
Previous inspection grade	Not previously inspected under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

The headteacher of this school is Lisa Hardy. This school is part of the Diocese of Chichester Academy Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer, Mark Talbot, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Archdeacon Luke Irvine-Capel.

## **What is it like to attend this school?**

There has been much turbulence in senior leadership over the past few years. The school is now in safe hands and is going from strength to strength in 'growing futures, rooted in love, hope and respect.' Expectations have risen. Pupils are happy. Parents have noticed the many positive changes in this very caring school.

Pupils behave well. The school's rule of 'be ready, respectful and safe' is understood by all. Pupils are kind to each other. They try hard in lessons, presenting their work with pride. Pupils love receiving a 'rainbow shout-out' for following the school rules. Relationships between staff and pupils are warm and respectful. Everyone is welcome at St Columba. Pupils of all ages play together during breaktimes nicely.

Pupils enjoy the ever-increasing experiences that the school offers. Attendance is high. There is a wide range of clubs on offer, such as yoga, football and book club. These clubs are designed to meet pupils' interests and needs well. Year 6 pupils recall with excitement the teamwork they displayed during the recent residential trip. They loved learning new skills such as paddle boarding and geo-caching.

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

Recent changes have made such a positive difference to pupils' learning and behaviour. The trust, school leaders and staff are united in their ambition for pupils in this school. The school's transition board, which has aspects of governance delegated to it, rightly offers strong support and challenge to the school.

The school has successfully introduced a new approach to the teaching of phonics. Pupils learn to read well. They practise reading using books that contain the sounds that they know. Any pupil who needs extra support in remembering letter sounds or blending sounds together receives the help they need. The school promotes reading well, with initiatives such as 'reading bingo'. Pupils read widely and often, from a wide range of reading genres.

Pupils' attainment at the end of key stage 2 last year was in line with the national picture. However, progress in writing and maths was significantly below average. This was due, in part, to a legacy of weaker teaching, assessment and curriculum design in the past. This does not reflect the current quality of education in the school. Typically, pupils progress through the curriculum well. Some of the legacy remains, however. Whereas children in early years write confidently, using their phonics knowledge well, some pupils in key stage 1 and lower key stage 2 are not yet writing at the right standard for their age. The school has strengthened the teaching of writing so these pupils are catching up.

An ambitious curriculum is in place, including for the significant number of pupils with special needs and/or disabilities (SEND). The curriculum builds knowledge in a well-ordered way from Reception to Year 6. This takes careful account of the mixed-

age class structure. Overall, the school has considered the important subject-specific skills and knowledge that pupils should develop over time. Staff know the needs of all pupils well, including pupils with SEND.

Staff have strong subject knowledge, particularly in subjects where curriculum design is more robust. Pupils with SEND benefit from effective adaptation in lessons. Staff help pupils with SEND to overcome any barriers to learning and behaviour well. However, in a few subjects in the wider curriculum, there is too much content. Teachers do not know exactly what to check that pupils have learned. This results in some pupils not acquiring deep knowledge. At times in these subjects, teachers plan activities that do not support pupils to learn the identified knowledge as effectively as they could.

Children in the early years get off to a flying start in an highly engaging environment. They are motivated and curious. Staff provide the children with an array of rich learning experiences that spark their interests and curiosity. Activities sustain children's concentration well and help them learn new vocabulary. Staff model language clearly. For example, children love trying out their new words in the mechanics role play area. They make good progress in their learning.

Pupils benefit from many personal development opportunities which broaden their experiences and build their cultural capital. The school provides interesting trips and visitors. Pupils discuss news events in assemblies to widen their knowledge about the world around them. The school supports pupils to recognise and regulate their emotions and develop resilience well. Pupils learn about and contribute to society through fundraising and being pen pals for a local nursing home.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

## **What does the school need to do to improve?**

### **(Information for the school and appropriate authority)**

- In a few foundation subjects, the curriculum needs further refining to ensure that there is clarity in what pupils need to learn and remember. Pupils do not always learn the essential knowledge and skills they need for the future in sufficient depth. The school should ensure that staff know exactly what pupils need to learn and remember across the whole curriculum, plan lessons that tie in with this and check pupils are learning this key knowledge as well as they could.
- In the past, there has been some inconsistencies in the teaching of writing. Some younger pupils in key stage 1 and lower key stage 2 are not achieving as well as they should in writing. The school must continue their work to ensure that all pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education.

## 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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	147701
<b>Local authority</b>	Hampshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	10322043
<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Academy converter
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4 to 11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	94
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	Board of trustees
<b>Chair of trust</b>	Archdeacon Luke Irvine-Capel
<b>CEO of trust</b>	Mark Talbot
<b>Headteacher</b>	Lisa Hardy
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.stcolumbaprimary.co.uk">www.stcolumbaprimary.co.uk</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	Not previously inspected

## Information about this school

- St Columba CE Primary School is part of the Diocese of Chichester Academy Trust (DCAT).
- There have been many changes in leadership and teaching staff at the school over recent years. The current headteacher is the senior education leader from DCAT. She took on the headship of St Columba CE Primary School in September 2023. She will become the executive headteacher in September 2024.
- The proportion of pupils with SEND is well above that seen in other schools nationally.
- The school does not currently use any alternative provision.
- The school is part of the Diocese of Portsmouth. The last section 48 inspection of the predecessor school took place in March 2018.
- St Columba CE Primary School opened as a new academy in January 2020. When its predecessor school, St Columba Church of England Primary Academy, was last inspected by Ofsted, it was judged to be inadequate overall.

## 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 meetings with the senior leaders, and other school leaders, school staff and pupils. The lead inspector met with two trustees and five members of the schools' transition board, including the chair.
- The lead inspector also met with the chief executive officer (CEO) and the deputy CEO from DCAT. She held telephone calls with a representative from the Diocese of Portsmouth and a team manager from the local authority's Primary Behaviour Service.
- The inspectors carried out deep dives in early reading, mathematics and history. For each deep dive, the inspector held discussions about the curriculum, visited lessons in all three classes, spoke to teachers, talked to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. The lead inspector listened to some pupils reading to a familiar adult. She also considered the school's curriculum in some other subjects through discussions with leaders and pupils, and looking at work.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the team: 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 lead inspector reviewed a wide range of documentation, including leaders' self-evaluation of the school and school development plan.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour throughout the inspection. They spoke to pupils about their views on behaviour in school. Inspectors considered how the school is supporting pupils' personal development.
- The inspectors considered the responses to the confidential staff and pupil surveys. They took account of the responses to the online survey, Ofsted Parent View, parents' free-text comments.

## Inspection team

Lea Hannam, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Diane Charman

Ofsted Inspector

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