

Inspection of a good school: St Catherine's Church of England Primary School

Park Road, Ware, Hertfordshire SG12 0AW

Inspection dates:

10 and 11 July 2024

Outcome

St Catherine's Church of England Primary School continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are proud of their busy, friendly school. They play, cooperate and learn happily together in this safe, nurturing environment. Pupils' relationships with friends and adults are strong. This starts in the early years. Pupils understand and follow the rules for behaviour and learning. They enjoy learning. Pupils focus on their work and achieve well. Pupils are looked after well. If they are worried about anything, there is always an adult there to help.

Older pupils are great role models to their younger friends. Classrooms and playgrounds are warm and welcoming places. Pupils love receiving rosettes in assembly for demonstrating important values such as honesty, respect and kindness. They enjoy enrichment events such as Careers Week and taking part in African heritage activities. Pupils learn how to persevere and to treat others with respect.

Pupils have many clubs to choose from, including cheerleading, choir, gymnastics and a range of other sports. Every child can attend a live music event. Pupils in the choir enjoy singing at special events and in the local community. During the inspection, older pupils were excitedly talking about preparations for performing their end of term concert. The school develops pupils' talents and interests well.

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

The school has designed a curriculum that is ambitious for all pupils. It sets out precisely the knowledge and vocabulary that pupils need to learn and the order in which these should be taught. The school has recently implemented new curriculum plans in a small number of subjects. Pupils are steadily catching up on the prior knowledge they need in these subjects.

Pupils' current work and knowledge show that most pupils, including pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), are learning and achieving well. In science, for example, pupils confidently recall how magnets have two poles that attract or repel when pushed together. Children in the early years benefit from a stimulating learning environment of their own, where Nursery and Reception children play and learn happily together. They explore purposeful activities that support their learning and development.

Pupils with SEND are supported well. Staff skilfully adapt carefully chosen activities that give pupils confidence to succeed. The school identifies the needs of pupils with SEND swiftly and accurately. Teachers understand individual pupils' needs well.

Teachers regularly check pupils' understanding. They ask pupils lots of questions to ensure pupils understand their learning. Pupils appreciate the opportunities teachers provide to talk with a partner about their learning. This enables pupils to share ideas, learn from each other and develop their communication skills.

The school prioritises reading and promotes a love of books. It has implemented an effective phonics programme. All staff are well trained to deliver this. Reading gets off to a good start in the early years. Children learn to blend sounds and recognise syllables in words. Staff quickly spot anyone needing extra help with reading and put this in place. Pupils enjoy reading a wide range of high-quality texts. Everyone is proud of the school's libraries and their wide selection of books. Pupils talk enthusiastically about favourite authors and stories.

Pupils behave extremely well in lessons and around the school. They are courteous and well mannered, politely holding doors open for others. The school promotes regular attendance but, despite their efforts, some pupils are missing too much time in school.

The school teaches pupils' personal development well. Pupils learn about healthy relationships at an age-appropriate level. Expert visitors teach pupils about concepts such as consent, boundaries, and what to do if they feel unsafe. Pupils enjoy a range of responsibilities, including sports leaders, library monitors and 'worship warriors'. Some volunteer to collect litter to keep the school clean and tidy. Pupils enjoy contributing to their community.

Pupils benefit from a wide range of experiences, such as trips, visits from speakers and sports competitions. Older pupils look forward to residential visits and challenging themselves with adventurous activities. Trips, including to the British Museum and Mountfitchet Castle, bring learning to life outside the classroom.

Staff thoroughly enjoy working here. There is a strong team spirit. Staff greatly appreciate the time they have to plan together and undertake extra responsibilities. They value leaders' support to manage their workload and well-being.

Governors are well informed and act strategically in the best interests of the school. When concerns, complaints or challenging situations occasionally arise, governors manage the processes properly. The vast majority of parents and carers speak positively about the school and are supportive of its work.

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 small number of curriculum areas, the school has recently introduced new curriculum plans to improve the sequencing and progression of knowledge and skills and to deepen pupils' learning. Teachers are delivering these new plans effectively, but leaders have not had enough time to check the impact on pupils' outcomes. The school should ensure that the impact of these changes is fully evaluated to ensure that they are making the difference intended.
- A small number of pupils miss too much time in school. This has an impact on the progress of these pupils, and they miss out on the opportunities for learning and personal development being provided by the school. The school should further strengthen its efforts to secure the regular attendance of all pupils.

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 first ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be good in July 2018.

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	117410
Local authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	10323643
Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	394
Appropriate authority	Local authority
Chair of governing body	Dwane Charalambous
Headteacher	Hazel Leslie
Website	www.stcatherines.herts.sch.uk
Dates of previous inspection	10 and 11 July 2018, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school does not use any off-site providers of alternative education.
- The school is a Church of England School in the Diocese of St Albans. The most recent inspection of the school's religious character, under section 48 of the Education Act 2005, was in November 2022. Its next section 48 inspection will be within eight years from this date.

Information about this inspection

The inspector carried out this ungraded inspection under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

- Inspections are a point-in-time judgement about the quality of a school's education provision.
- The inspector discussed any continued impact of the pandemic with the school and has taken that into account in his evaluation of the school.
- The inspector carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, science, and design and technology. For each deep dive, the inspector 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 inspector listened to some pupils read to a familiar adult.

- The inspector held meetings with leaders, including governors, and with representatives working on behalf of the local authority and the diocese.
- 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 took account of a range of other school information, including development plans, policies, minutes of meetings of the governing body and reports from the local authority and the diocese.
- The inspector took account of pupils' and staff's views by observing interactions and holding separate discussions with groups of them.
- The inspector considered the views of parents through responses to the online survey, Ofsted Parent View, including free-text comments. The inspector spoke on the telephone to three parents, received an email from one parent and spoke informally with parents at the start of the school day.
- The inspector gathered the views of staff through discussions conducted throughout the inspection and via Ofsted's staff survey. No responses to the Ofsted pupil survey were received. The inspector spoke with groups of pupils throughout the inspection to gather their views.

Inspection team

Nick Rudman, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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