

Inspection of The Pilgrim School (A Church of England Primary With Nursery)

Warwick Crescent, Borstal, Rochester, Kent ME1 3LF

Inspection dates:	7 and 8 January 2025
The quality of education	Outstanding
Behaviour and attitudes	Outstanding
Personal development	Outstanding
Leadership and management	Outstanding
Early years provision	Outstanding
Previous inspection grade	Not previously inspected under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

The headteacher of this school is Alison Mepsted. The school is part of The Pilgrim Multi-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 (CEO), Janet Taylor, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Mark Wilkes.

Ofsted has not previously inspected The Pilgrim School under section 5 of the Education Act 2005. However, Ofsted previously judged The Pilgrim School to be outstanding for overall effectiveness, before it opened as an academy. Since September 2024, schools have not been awarded an overall effectiveness grade.

What is it like to attend this school?

The Pilgrim School is more than just a school for its pupils. The school and its community have a meaningful, lasting impact on pupils' lives. Pupils treasure being a part of it. Pupils talk about being 'forever Pilgrim'. They develop a deep understanding of positive character attributes such as courage, compassion and integrity. They strive to live by these in their daily lives.

Pupils relish the challenges of the school's ambitious, highly inclusive curriculum. They work hard, persevering when faced with a challenge. They are reflective and conscientious, determined to do their very best. Pupils achieve extremely well.

Pupils are taught how to behave well and how to manage their own emotions positively. This starts in the early years, where children are warmly supported by adults to learn important routines and social skills. Pupils behave exceptionally well.

Positive relationships are deeply embedded throughout the school. Pupils of all ages play and learn together harmoniously. Older pupils act as buddies for younger pupils. 'The sanctuary' provides a caring, nurturing space for pupils who are feeling worried or upset. If pupils fall out with their peers, adults help to resolve this quickly. Adults ensure that pupils and their families get all the help they need.

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

The school has designed a broad, bespoke curriculum. This meets the needs of pupils, including those who are disadvantaged and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). The content that pupils will learn has been very carefully considered and organised. This starts right from the beginning of early years. Teaching of important character attributes are skilfully woven throughout the curriculum. These teach pupils how to be 'forever Pilgrim'. Activities, workshops, events and visits are all purposefully planned to deeply enrich pupils' learning.

Learning to read is at the heart of the curriculum. The school is determined that all pupils become confident, fluent readers. Children get off to a strong start learning to read. The teaching of phonics is of a high quality. Staff continually check children's understanding while they learn the phonics code. Pupils who fall behind are given tailored support. This focuses sharply on the gaps in their understanding and helps them catch up quickly. The school's positive culture of reading permeates school life. The school's book swap and reading café contribute to this significantly. Pupils talk about reading with great enjoyment.

Teachers are very knowledgeable and highly skilled. They explain new concepts clearly and precisely. They show pupils what they need to do to be successful in their learning. Staff know pupils really well. They deliberately consider the needs of pupils with SEND. Throughout the curriculum, highly effective adaptations are in place to make sure all pupils can access the rich curriculum content. This includes the use of adapted equipment and resources. Skilled staff provide highly effective support and guidance for these pupils.

Staff make sure pupils know the subject-specific vocabulary they need when starting new topics. Children in the early years benefit from high-quality interactions with skilled adults. Through these interactions, staff model important language. They skilfully move children's learning on and they pose questions that spark children's curiosity.

Pupils have lots of opportunities to practise and apply their learning. Lesson activities also develop pupils' resilience and interpersonal skills. Teachers routinely review what pupils have learned previously. This enables teachers to check whether pupils have remembered essential knowledge. It also helps pupils to recall and build on their prior learning. Pupils are highly motivated to learn. They develop a secure understanding of essential knowledge. They use subject-specific language confidently when articulating their understanding. They achieve highly across the curriculum.

The school's wider curriculum is deliberately designed to promote pupils' broader development. The school council plays a pivotal role in deciding the content of this. All pupils in Year 6 are given a leadership responsibility, for example as a digital leader or as a member of the worship team. Pupils fulfil these roles confidently and enthusiastically.

Pupils benefit from a wide range of enrichment opportunities, for example in music and sport. Pupils are taught about diversity and difference. They are knowledgeable about, and respectful of, people's different cultures, beliefs and disabilities. Pupils make a positive contribution to the local community. They sing at a local care home and organise events that contribute to the local food bank. The school continually ensures that the most disadvantaged pupils benefit from the wider curriculum, including those who have SEND.

Staff are overwhelmingly positive about working in the school. The school invests in their staff, providing high-quality training and professional development. Staff appreciate the efforts of leaders to support their workload and their well-being.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

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	143832
Local authority	Medway
Inspection number	10341834
Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	217
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Mark Wilkes
CEO of the trust	Janet Taylor
Headteacher	Alison Mepsted
Website	www.thepilgrimschool.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- The Pilgrim School converted to an academy in December 2016. It is part of the Pilgrim Multi-Academy Trust.
- The school is a Church of England school in the Diocese of Rochester. Its most recent section 48 inspection was in February 2020.
- The school uses one registered alternative provision.
- The school runs a breakfast club and an after-school club.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005. During a graded inspection, we grade the school for each of our key judgements (quality of education; behaviour and attitudes; personal development; and leadership and management) and for any relevant provision judgement (early years and/or sixth form provision). Schools receiving a graded inspection from September 2024 will not be given an overall effectiveness grade.

- Inspections are a point-in-time evaluation 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, deputy headteachers and other leaders in the school and the trust, including the CEO. They also spoke with representatives from the board of trustees, the local governing body and a representative from the Diocese of Rochester.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, history, mathematics and physical education. 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. Inspectors listened to some pupils read. Inspectors also discussed the curriculum in some other subjects.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspectors: reviewed the single central record; took into account 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 met with pupils from different year groups to talk about their learning and experiences at school, both in small groups and informally at breaktimes.
- Inspectors considered the responses to the online survey, Ofsted Parent View. They also took into consideration the online staff and pupil surveys.

Inspection team

Leah Morgan, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Linda Appleby

Ofsted Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
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