

Inspection of Aston St Mary's Church of England Aided Primary School

School Lane, Aston, Stevenage, Hertfordshire SG2 7HA

Inspection dates:	14 and 15 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	Outstanding

Until November 2020, the school was exempt from routine inspection because it was judged outstanding for overall effectiveness at its previous inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005. The school has not been inspected under section 5 of the Act since December 2014. Since September 2024, schools have not been awarded an overall effectiveness grade.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils thrive at this warm and nurturing school. They enjoy coming to school to see their friends and complete interesting learning. Pupils have ownership of the school values, as Year 5 pupils choose the ones the school will focus on the following year. They communicate their choices to the rest of the school, and all pupils understand them.

Staff have high expectations of pupils, and pupils have high expectations of each other. Pupils are extremely respectful and listen carefully to each other's thoughts and ideas. They respect everyone's similarities and differences. Pupils trust the adults at school and know that they will support them with any issues that they might have. As a result, behaviour around the school is admirable.

Pupils are well focused in lessons and thrive on discussions, where they clearly present their point. They know that staff want them to do their very best at all times, and they ensure that they do this. Pupils are extremely confident and precise when they articulate the learning that they have been doing. Therefore, they achieve very well.

Pupils can develop leadership skills in the school, for example in the school council, which responds to pupils' requests and ideas to make positive changes within the school.

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

The school has an ambitious, well-thought-out curriculum, from the early years onwards. The school ensures that pupils progress through the curriculum, sequentially building their skills and knowledge. Children in the early years gain the knowledge and attitudes that mean they are well prepared for the curriculum in Year 1.

Staff have strong subject knowledge, which they present well. They use their knowledge to plan clear sequences of lessons that help pupils to build their knowledge over time. Staff address misconceptions quickly. They skilfully question pupils to ensure they are developing their understanding. Staff check that pupils can remember key knowledge, which they do exceptionally well. Pupils use the subject-specific vocabulary that they learn accurately, across the curriculum. As a result of highly effective teaching, pupils achieve consistently highly.

Staff are highly ambitious for pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). The school identifies the needs of pupils with SEND quickly so that support can be put in place swiftly, as required. Staff are well trained to support pupils' individual needs and adapt the curriculum so that everyone can access it. Parents and carers, pupils and the school work together to ensure that pupils with SEND achieve as well as they can.

Children begin learning to read and to love books as soon as they start in Reception. They explore books in depth and the adventures that the characters have. This enjoyment of text continues as pupils move through the school, and they access the well-resourced, diverse library. Pupils develop their knowledge of phonics quickly due to the expert

teaching they receive. Any pupils who need additional support with reading receive it. The school shares pupils' learning in phonics with parents so that they can practise with their children at home. Pupils soon become confident and fluent readers.

Children learn the routines and expectations of the school from the very start in Reception. They know that they need to follow these, which they do. Pupils have exceptionally positive attitudes to their learning. They are clear on the rewards that they can gain and strive to achieve these, for example house points. They are equally as clear about the consequences of their behaviour. Attendance is high. The school provides effective support when families or pupils need help to secure regular attendance.

Pupils have a wide range of personal development opportunities available to them. These help to develop pupils' character. They are accepting and respectful individuals who value everyone and what they contribute. Pupils relish the trips they go on to develop their learning in the curriculum. The residential trip is popular, as it develops pupils' independence and 'have-a-go' skills. Pupils learn to stay safe online as well as when crossing the road, and they learn to use their bikes safely. A visit from the local magistrate helped to teach pupils about the law. Some pupils are now considering a job working in law as a future career.

The school ensures that staff members have a manageable workload. Leaders prioritise staff well-being, ensuring that policies and procedures are effective while not being overly burdensome. Staff are highly supportive of the school. Governors are very well skilled in their roles. They know and fulfil their responsibilities exceptionally well. Parents are overwhelmingly positive about the school and very supportive of the work that it does.

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	117421
Local authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	10345204
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	132
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Janet Bird
Headteacher	Julie Winwood
Website	www.astonmarys.herts.sch.uk
Dates of previous inspection	11 and 12 December 2014, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school does not make use of any alternative provision.
- This is a Church of England primary school in the Diocese of St Albans. The school had an inspection of its religious character, under section 48 of the Education Act 2005, in June 2023. The next section 48 inspection is due within 8 years.

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.
- The lead inspector spoke with members of the governing body. The lead inspector also spoke with the school effectiveness adviser from the local authority.
- The inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics and history. For each deep dive, inspectors held discussions about the curriculum, visited a sample of lessons, spoke with teachers, spoke with some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors also considered the curriculum in some other subjects.
- The lead inspector also spoke to those responsible for the early years foundation stage, SEND, behaviour, attendance and personal development.
- 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.

Inspection team

Katie Devenport, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Peter Hynes

Ofsted Inspector

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