

Inspection of a school judged good for overall effectiveness before September 2024: Thomas Bullock Church of England Primary and Nursery Academy

Pound Green, Shipdham, Thetford, Norfolk IP25 7LF

Inspection dates:

1 and 2 April 2025

Outcome

Evidence gathered during this ungraded (section 8) inspection suggests that the school's work may have improved significantly across all areas since the previous inspection. The school's next inspection will be a graded inspection.

The headteacher of this school is Shannon O'Sullivan. This school is part of the Diocese of Norwich Education and Academies 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), Oliver Burwood, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Beverly Tilman.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils receive a top-class education. They delight in coming to school because the warm and caring environment provides a safe space for them to thrive and flourish. Adults set the highest standards for pupils. Pupils live up to these expectations, trying their very best in lessons and achieving extremely well. By the time pupils leave at the end of Year 6, they depart as well-rounded, compassionate and knowledgeable young people.

From youngest to oldest, pupils mix with effortless ease during social times. With playleaders at the helm, activities such as circus skills, parachute games and dancing 'the Macarena' are commonplace at lunchtimes. With smiles aplenty, older pupils take great pride in supporting the youngest children. They do this with kindness and care, values that permeate the school.

Pupils benefit greatly from a wide range of rich opportunities; they are guided to 'let their light shine'. This can be through finding talents and interests via extra-curricular clubs or by making a real difference to the school community. For example, pupils serving on the 'ethos team' are taking the lead on redesigning the school's peace garden. This is a calm and welcoming space for pupils to reflect in a moment of quiet, should they need to.

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

Pupils learn and develop extremely well. The school community works as one to ensure that pupils receive nothing but the best. Those pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) receive precise support and guidance. This is because teachers have an accurate picture of what pupils with SEND can do, and where they have difficulties. As a result, teaching is well-tailored to meet individual needs.

Teachers explain new ideas and concepts skilfully. They make accurate checks to ensure that pupils understand new learning before they move on. This is especially the case when teaching the youngest children to read. Any errors are quickly identified and corrected. Pupils who need additional support with reading receive effective help. They catch up quickly. Consequently, pupils become accurate and confident readers. As they move through the school, pupils are immersed in high-quality texts. They learn, and correctly use, complex vocabulary, developing a real love of reading and writing.

Children settle and become well acquainted with the routines of the Nursery and Reception classes. Two-year-old children have their emotional and care needs met extremely well. Across the early years children learn and use many new words. Pupils build upon these strong foundations as they move through the school. More complex and subject specific vocabulary slips off the tongue, for example enabling pupils to explain scientific and geographical phenomena.

The provision for pupils' personal development is of a very high quality. Pupils benefit enormously from the well-considered personal development programme. They try new things, persevere and widen their horizons. Much of this strong work helps pupils to develop their character and independence. Pupils receive well-tailored support if they need help managing their emotions and feelings. Those who have responsibilities on groups such as the school council, eco-council or as digital leaders, to name but a few, carry these out with diligence. Younger pupils aspire to these roles as they move through the school.

Classrooms are vibrant, happy places. While pupils have much fun and laughter with their friends, they know that when play stops and work starts, they are expected to concentrate and try their best. This is exactly what they do. Pupils have very positive attitudes to their learning.

Pupils' attendance is very high. This has been the case for some time, because leaders keep a close eye on how regularly pupils attend. If this slips, leaders step in swiftly to support pupils and their families to get things back on track. This approach proves extremely effective.

Staff are extremely proud to work at the school. They receive high-quality training to continually polish and refine their practice.

Trust leaders, trustees and governors have a clear view of the many strengths of the school, along with aspects that they continue to further refine. This means they hold leaders to account, along with providing wise support in equal measure.

Leaders' actions since the previous inspection have brought about significant improvement. The very strong published outcomes at the end of key stage 2 over the past few years have been because of the collective work of leaders, teachers and wider staff to provide the best for pupils from the start of their time in school until they leave in Year 6. Without fail, leaders take decisions in the very best interests of pupils. This is because pupils sit at the heart of all the school does.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Background

Until September 2024, on a graded (section 5) inspection we gave schools an overall effectiveness grade, in addition to the key and provision judgements. Overall effectiveness grades given before September 2024 will continue to be visible on school inspection reports and on Ofsted's website. From September 2024 graded inspections will not include an overall effectiveness grade. This school was, before September 2024, judged good for its overall effectiveness.

We have now inspected the school to determine whether it has taken effective action to maintain the standards identified at that previous inspection. 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's work has improved significantly or that it may not be as strong as it was at the last inspection, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection. A graded inspection 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 for overall effectiveness in January 2020.

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	141192
Local authority	Norfolk
Inspection number	10366661
Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	2 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	224
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Beverly Tilman
CEO of the trust	Oliver Burwood
Headteacher	Shannon O'Sullivan
Website	www.thomasbullock.dneat.org
Dates of previous inspection	8 and 9 January 2020, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school is part of the Diocese of Norwich Education and Academies Trust.
- The headteacher joined the school in 2020, just after the previous inspection. The headteacher is also responsible for one other school in the trust.
- The school has an onsite Nursery, which includes provision for two-year-olds.
- The school does not currently make use of any alternative provision.
- The school has a Christian religious character. The school's most recent section 48 inspection of its religious character took place in January 2018.
- The discovery of reinforced autoclaved aerated concrete (RAAC) led to the enforced closure of the school hall between September 2023 and January 2025.

Information about this inspection

- 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. The inspector discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- The inspector held meetings with the headteacher, deputy headteacher, other senior leaders and a range of school staff. The inspector held meetings with members of the trust board, the local governing body and trust leaders.
- The inspector visited a sample of lessons, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- 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 reviewed a range of documents, including, attendance records, pupil records, records of trust board meetings, school development plans and school self-evaluation documents.
- The inspector considered the responses to the online survey for parents, Ofsted Parent View, including the free-text responses, and Ofsted's online staff survey.

Inspection team

Nathan Lowe, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

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