

Inspection of a good school: St Mary the Virgin Church of England Primary School

High Street, Hartfield, East Sussex TN7 4AA

Inspection date:

4 March 2020

Outcome

St Mary the Virgin Church of England Primary School continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

This is a small school with a very big heart. The school's Christian values of 'love, strength and faith' are woven into the very fabric of the school. Pupils are proud ambassadors for their school. They told us that they enjoy coming to school and that the school feels like 'one big family'.

Staff know pupils very well. They make sure that pupils get the support they need to flourish in their learning. Pupils try their hardest to do their best. In class, we saw pupils using their 'learning powers' to help them persevere with their work and solve problems independently.

Pupils feel very safe in school. They are kind, caring and look out for one another. For example, each Year 6 pupil acts as a 'buddy' to a child in Reception Year. Pupils behave exceptionally well around the school. Unkind behaviour between pupils is very rare but, if it does happen, adults are quick to put a stop to it.

Parents and carers are overwhelmingly positive about the school. One parent, reflecting the views of many, told us: 'I am so pleased that my child is lucky enough to attend a school that is so supportive, kind and inclusive.'

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

Leaders have designed an interesting, varied and ambitious curriculum for all pupils. This results in motivated pupils who enjoy their lessons. Nonetheless, leaders are not complacent. They recognise that there are areas within the curriculum where pupils could be challenged further in their learning. This will help pupils make even greater progress in their learning across the curriculum.

Leaders and teachers have a very clear picture of the school's curriculum, carefully considering the knowledge and skills they want pupils to learn in all subjects. Linking subjects to the local area helps to provide a useful context to the learning. For example,

in a geography lesson, pupils were using aerial pictures of surrounding villages to learn about the physical characteristics of a locality.

Teachers explain things well. They use their good subject knowledge to introduce new ideas and key vocabulary clearly. Teachers told us that this is because of the effective training they have received within the federation. In class, pupils respond confidently to teachers' questions. They can explain their ideas well.

The teaching of reading has a high priority from the start of the Reception Year. Adults are well trained to teach phonics. Teachers keep regular checks on pupils' progress. Any pupil who falls behind or struggles is given the help they need to catch up. As a result, nearly all pupils are successful in reaching the expected standard in the national Year 1 phonics screening check. However, not all pupils achieve as well as they should in reading by the end of key stage 1. This is because they have not sufficiently developed their understanding of what they are reading. Reading is promoted in lots of ways throughout the school. During class reading time, we saw pupils captivated as their teachers read their class story.

Teachers understand how to meet the needs of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). They make sure that any extra support is focused on the needs of the pupil. In lessons, we saw well-trained teaching assistants supporting these pupils very effectively.

Children in the Reception Year are happy and confident. Adults are attentive to the children's needs and support them effectively. They make sure that children develop well in all areas of learning and are ready for Year 1.

All staff have very high expectations of pupils' behaviour. As a consequence, pupils behave well throughout the school. Classes are calm. Pupils concentrate well and show very positive attitudes towards their learning. Relationships between staff and pupils and between pupils are very positive.

Teachers provide all kinds of interesting opportunities for pupils to learn in different ways. School trips are very popular. As one pupil explained, 'not only do we have lots of fun, but we also learn a lot linked to our topic'. Theme weeks or enrichment days also help pupils to learn about, and reflect upon, other issues of importance such as fair trade. Pupils told us that they enjoy coming together to work with pupils from other schools within the federation.

Staff in the school are passionate about their work. They are proud to be part of the school community. This is because leaders have worked hard to create an environment where staff feel valued. Leaders, including governors, are careful to ensure that teachers' workload is manageable. Staff appreciate this.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Staff make sure that pupils are kept safe and are very well cared for. All staff adopt the attitude of 'it could happen here'. They remain alert to potential safeguarding and well-being concerns. Staff are well trained and know what to do if they have any concerns about a pupil. Leaders act quickly on any information they are given. They work closely with a range of agencies to make sure pupils and their families get the support they need.

Pupils learn about how to keep themselves safe. For example, they understand the potential dangers associated with working online.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Pupils are confident at decoding words, but they do not always develop the necessary language comprehension skills in reading by the end of key stage 1. While pupils generally attain well by the end of key stage 2, the proportion of pupils reaching the expected level of attainment for reading at the end of key stage 1 has been below that seen in other schools nationally for the last three years. Leaders need to ensure that pupils develop these important skills as part of the reading curriculum.
- Leaders should continue their work on the curriculum to raise levels of challenge so that pupils make even greater progress across the breadth of subjects, including reading, writing and mathematics.

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 a section 8 inspection of a good or non-exempt outstanding school. We do not give graded judgements on a section 8 inspection. However, if we find some evidence that the school could now be better than good, then the next inspection will be a section 5 inspection. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the section 8 inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will convert the section 8 inspection to a section 5 inspection immediately.

This is the first section 8 inspection since we judged the school to be good on 6–7 July 2016.

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 Ofsted Parent View information 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.

If you are the school and you are not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

In the report, '[disadvantaged pupils](#)' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route.

School details

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| Unique reference number | 114553 |
| Local authority | East Sussex |
| Inspection number | 10133184 |
| Type of school | Primary |
| School category | Voluntary aided school |
| Age range of pupils | 4 to 11 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision | Mixed |
| Number of pupils on the school roll | 98 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair of governing body | Alan Brundle |
| Headteacher | James Procter (Executive Headteacher) |
| Website | www.hartfieldschool.co.uk |
| Date of previous inspection | 6–7 July 2016, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005 |

Information about this school

- St Mary the Virgin Church of England Primary School is a smaller-than-average primary school.
- The school is part of the Pioneer Federation. All schools within the federation share the same governing body.

Information about this inspection

- We met with the executive headteacher, the head of school, the special educational needs and disabilities coordinator, subject leaders and members of the governing body, including the chair of governors. We made a telephone call to a representative from the local authority and a representative from the Diocese.
- We did deep dives in the following subjects: reading, mathematics and geography. In each subject, we met with curriculum leaders, visited lessons, talked to pupils, spoke to teachers and looked at pupils' work.

- We reviewed safeguarding records, including the central record of recruitment checks on staff.
- We spoke to parents during the inspection and considered the views of 40 parents who responded to Ofsted's parental questionnaire, Parent View.
- We considered the views of staff from conversations and took account of the 12 responses to Ofsted's staff survey.
- We spoke with pupils formally and informally about their day-to-day experiences at the school. We also considered the 35 responses to Ofsted's pupil survey.

Inspection team

Michael Green, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Louise Walker

Her Majesty's Inspector

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