

Inspection of a school judged good for overall effectiveness before September 2024: St Mary the Virgin Church of England Primary School

High Street, Hartfield, East Sussex TN7 4AA

Inspection date:

29 April 2025

Outcome

St Mary the Virgin Church of England Primary School has taken effective action to maintain the standards identified at the previous inspection.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils delight in attending this welcoming school. Staff show a keen interest in the welfare of the pupils. The school's vision of pupils 'being the best that they can be in a thriving community' is evident throughout the school. Playtimes are joyful. Pupils of all ages play with one another. They clamber on the pirate ship and relish playing games together. Older pupils buddy up with younger children. The school is a place where pupils are happy and safe.

The school is ambitious for its pupils. Pupils achieve well across a broad range of subjects. They produce high-quality work that adorns the corridors. They explore their learning through a variety of engaging activities. For example, pupils visit a local farm for forest activities. They learn about teamwork and how to care for their environment. Pupils are articulate and talk with confidence about what they learn.

Pupils behave exceptionally well. The school sets clear expectations for behaviour and helps pupils to abide by these in a caring and compassionate manner. Pupils are respectful of one another and courteous towards adults. Pupils appointed as peer guardians help to resolve conflicts that arise in the playground.

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

The school provides an engaging and well-sequenced curriculum. The school has worked diligently to refine the curriculum since the previous inspection. The curriculum is crafted to meet the needs and the interests of the pupils well. Teachers collaborate across the schools in the federation. They work together to share curriculum ideas that enhance

learning. They review the impact of the curriculum on their pupils. This strengthens the delivery of the curriculum and supports the workload for teachers. Teachers receive training that helps them to develop their practice. This also ensures that they have secure subject knowledge.

Pupils gain the reading and mathematical knowledge needed to succeed. Children in the early years embed what they learn through a range of well-constructed activities. Children develop a love of stories. They enjoy enacting characters when learning through play. This prepares them for learning in key stage 1. Teachers support older pupils who have fallen behind in their reading to catch up swiftly. Pupils read with interest and become confident, fluent readers. Pupils apply their mathematical knowledge and skills across a wide range of subjects confidently. For example, pupils explore scale and measurement in geography and analyse graphs in science. This helps pupils to secure their mathematical knowledge and understanding.

Teachers regularly check in with pupils to ensure that they gain the knowledge needed. They use well-crafted questions to encourage pupils to deepen their understanding. When pupils struggle, staff check in with them to help them to secure the knowledge needed. Teachers reflect on what pupils know. They use this to adjust future learning so that pupils embed what they learn. Teachers are ambitious for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Teachers identify the needs of pupils well. They provide helpful guidance for pupils with SEND. The school has developed clear guidelines on how teaching could be adjusted to meet pupils' different needs. However, in some subjects, these adjustments are not fully embedded. This affects how well some pupils learn the intended curriculum, including the important knowledge they need for future learning.

The school has a positive and effective approach to behaviour management. Pupils are clear about the school's expectations for their behaviour. They behave well in class. They listen attentively to staff and are respectful of the views of their peers. Staff support pupils to manage and regulate their emotions. This enables pupils to access learning well. While attendance has been low in the past, the school has diligently addressed this. It works closely with families to ensure that pupils who have been absent now attend well.

The school provides a range of meaningful opportunities for pupils. Pupils engage in a variety of community and global projects. These help pupils to develop their moral and cultural understanding well. For example, pupils learn about the impact of loneliness on the elderly. They visit a local care home to put what they learn into practice. The school ensures that pupils' ideas and opinions are heard. Pupils connect to local and global activities. For example, pupils create artwork to sell in support of local organisations and engage with global charities. As a result, pupils are compassionate about their community and respectful of others.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

Information for the school and appropriate authority

- In some subjects, the school's adaptive teaching approaches are not firmly embedded. This affects how well some pupils with SEND learn the intended curriculum. Where this is the case, the school should ensure that these approaches are firmly embedded so that pupils with SEND gain the important subject knowledge they need.

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 second ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be good for overall effectiveness in 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 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	114553
Local authority	East Sussex
Inspection number	10379757
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	82
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Alan Brundle
Headteacher	James Procter (Executive Headteacher) Jane Robinson (Head of School)
Website	www.pioneerfederation.co.uk/stmarys/
Date of previous inspection	4 March 2020, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school is a voluntary aided Church of England primary school in the Diocese of Chichester. The school last received an inspection under Section 48 for its religious character in January 2018.
- The school is part of the Pioneer Federation, which is a federation with three other primary schools. The federation has one governing body, which has responsibility for all four schools.
- The school provides a breakfast and after-school club.
- The school does not currently use any alternative provision.

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 inspectors discussed any continued impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- The inspectors met with the executive headteacher, members of the governing body, other leaders and a range of staff.
- The inspectors spoke to representatives of the local authority and Diocese of Chichester.
- The inspectors 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 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.
- The inspectors reviewed a wide range of documents, including those related to governance of the school.
- The inspectors considered the views of parents and carers through their responses to Ofsted Parent View, including the free-text comments. The inspectors spoke to staff and considered the views of staff and pupils in the staff and pupil surveys. The inspectors spoke to pupils and parents during the inspection.

Inspection team

Graham Chisnell, lead inspector

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