

Inspection of a school judged good for overall effectiveness before September 2024: Ponsbourne St Mary's Church of England Primary School

Newgate Street Village, Hertford, Hertfordshire SG13 8RA

Inspection date:

11 December 2024

Outcome

Ponsbourne St Mary's 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?

This school helps pupils to be sociable and confident and to enjoy their learning. Pupils are kind to each other and respectful towards staff and visitors. They enjoy the 'family feel' and community atmosphere unique to this small school, describing it as 'small but mighty'. Pupils appreciate the many opportunities provided for them and genuinely trust their teachers and support staff. This is because they are well supported to learn effectively and are kept safe.

Pupils benefit from a rich diet of cultural activities organised by the school. These include annual Shakespeare productions, visits to the theatre, singing and residential adventure trips. They participate in community projects linked to their local church and other organisations. They also enjoy participating in a range of sporting activities organised every lunchtime and competitive fixtures with other schools. Children participate in purposeful activities outside. This helps them to develop resilience and self-esteem alongside improving their physical and communication skills.

Staff have high expectations of how pupils behave and learn. Pupils are helped to meet these high standards by staff, who act with care and consideration. As a result of this support, pupils engage enthusiastically in their learning. Their behaviour around the school is calm and orderly.

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

The school has ensured that the curriculum is well designed, broad and balanced. It meets the national requirements. Subjects link previous learning to what follows in a way

that develops pupils' thinking. For example, pupils learn how planets move around the sun and, later, how this causes night and day and different time zones.

Pupils typically learn and achieve well. This is because teachers are knowledgeable and explain things clearly. For example, teachers expertly break down and demonstrate the techniques needed to kick a ball, pass it or shoot for goal effectively. Teachers also check for pupils' misunderstandings and correct them quickly.

Learning activities are, for the most part, designed to help pupils build understanding and remember key knowledge. However, occasionally activities do not reinforce learning successfully or fully correspond to what the school has intended pupils should learn. This leads to gaps in pupils' knowledge. The school has recently trained subject leaders to check how well each subject is structured and taught; however, this is not yet fully embedded. Consequently, leaders can sometimes miss when pupils' learning is not as strong as it could be.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are quickly identified by well-trained staff and supported to learn effectively. Pupils with SEND typically achieve well because teachers and support staff make learning accessible in several ways. These can include visual, verbal and written prompts, for example.

Pupils quickly learn to read with fluency and accuracy. This is because staff use the phonics programme with precision and expertise. When pupils do not make the progress that they should, the school takes effective action to help them catch up. Similarly, the school ensures that children in the early years are helped to meet age-expected goals in mathematics and other areas of the curriculum, so they are well prepared for key stage 1.

Attendance is a high priority for the school. It is not as high as leaders want. The school carefully monitors and analyses what is preventing pupils from attending school well. They work with families and a range of agencies to help them overcome these barriers. The actions the school is taking is supporting most pupils to improve their attendance.

The school makes sure that learning is not disrupted in lessons and that pupils move around the site safely. Pupils know the school's rules and follow them well. This is because adults have clear expectations. Pupils support each other to behave well. They demonstrate a mature understanding and consideration of each other's well-being.

Pupils are well prepared for life beyond the school. The school provides pupils with a large range of enriching experiences as well as a comprehensive personal, social, health and economic education. Pupils are taught about different family structures, cultures and religions, and how to stay safe and keep healthy and fit. They take responsibility for their community. For example, they raise money for charity, help to tidy up after lunch, participate in the pupil parliament and organise games for younger children.

School leaders, including governors, have taken positive steps to ensure the school has maintained its high standards. The school supports staff well and is considerate of their workload, well-being and training.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Sometimes, the school does not ensure that learning activities match the intended curriculum. This can lead to some gaps in pupils' knowledge. The school should make sure that it identifies and resolves these inconsistencies so that pupils learn the curriculum as the school intends.

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 to be 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 October 2019.

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	117396
Local authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	10345202
Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	110
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Wayne Morris
Headteacher	Sarah Bridgman
Website	www.ponsbourne.herts.sch.uk
Dates of previous inspection	9 and 10 October 2019, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school's headteacher took up the post in January 2024. She works across two schools that have been in formal collaboration since that date. The school is currently consulting with parents about the school joining a formal federation arrangement.
- The school is a voluntary-aided Church of England school. The most recent section 48 inspection was in October 2019. The next section 48 inspection is due within eight years of this date.
- The school works with registered tutors to support a small number of pupils who are educated part time at home.

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. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.

- The inspectors met with school leaders and governors, including the chair and vice-chair of the governing body. They also spoke with a representative from the local authority.
- Inspectors visited a variety of lessons, met with some pupils and looked at samples of pupils' work. They also observed pupils at breaktimes and at the start of the day.
- 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

Una Buckley, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Laura Hewer

Ofsted Inspector

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