

Inspection of an outstanding school: St Andrew's Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School, Hitchin

Benslow Lane, Hitchin, Hertfordshire SG4 9RD

Inspection dates:

3 and 4 July 2024

Outcome

There has been no change to this school's overall judgement of outstanding as a result of this ungraded (section 8) inspection. However, the evidence gathered suggests that the inspection grade might not be as high if a graded (section 5) inspection were carried out now. The school's next inspection will be a graded inspection.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are happy in the nurturing atmosphere at St Andrew's. They are enthusiastic and inquisitive learners. The school's beautiful grounds provide them with opportunities to explore and grow. Pupils develop their talents and interests in a variety of ways. These include learning to play the clarinet, performing in the end of year show, or competing against local schools in a range of sporting events.

The school has high expectations of pupils' behaviour and achievement. Pupils are polite and respectful. In the dining room, they show their beautiful manners. The playground is a harmonious place. Older pupils take on the role of play leaders. They look after the equipment and ensure everyone has someone to play with. In lessons, pupils listen to their teachers and to each other. Pupils work hard and achieve very well, particularly in the core subjects of reading, writing and mathematics.

Pupils appreciate the range of trips the school offers, such as a day at the beach or a residential stay in Cumbria. These trips enhance pupils' learning of the curriculum. They teach them important life skills, such as independence and teamwork. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are fully included in the life of the school.

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

The school's curriculum is ambitious. The school has precisely mapped out the 'building blocks' of learning in each subject area. Leaders have ensured that across the curriculum, pupils build knowledge effectively towards clearly identified endpoints. The curriculum starts in early years where children acquire the important knowledge and skills they need for later learning. For example, teachers ensure that, through culture week, children learn

about life in other countries. They also enable children to learn about the world's oceans through the 'under the sea' topic. As a result, children are well prepared for studying geography in key stage 1 and key stage 2.

Teachers have good subject knowledge. They explain new learning well. They teach pupils the specific vocabulary needed for each subject. In mathematics, for example, Year 4 pupils learn, and use accurately, the words 'parallel' and 'perpendicular'. Pupils orally rehearse the new vocabulary. Effective repetition and frequent recaps help pupils commit their learning to their long-term memory.

In lessons, teachers check how well pupils are learning. They probe pupils' understanding and address any gaps or misconceptions that arise verbally. However, there are inconsistencies in the way teachers notice misconceptions or move pupils' learning on through their written work. On occasion, pupils do not get the information they need to improve their work, or the opportunity to make the improvements. This hampers some pupils' progress through the curriculum.

Reading is a high priority. Pupils have a wide and varied reading diet. Older pupils talk maturely about their reading preferences. They know why reading is important. The school has drawn up a list of 100 high-quality books. Pupils are motivated to read them by acquiring a 'reading passport.' The youngest pupils learn the sounds they need for early reading. They practise using books that contain the sounds they have learned. In early years and key stage 1, well-trained adults deliver the school's chosen phonics programme as it is intended. Pupils who need extra help with phonics are supported effectively.

The school has refined its systems for identifying pupils with SEND. Provision for these pupils is carefully planned to meet their needs. Most pupils with SEND access the same curriculum as their peers. Where necessary, they have adapted resources or help from additional adults. Pupils with SEND progress well against their starting points.

Pupils behave well. The school's values, such as courage and friendship, are modelled by adults and mirrored by pupils. Positive attitudes to learning lead most pupils to attend well. The school takes a sensible and tailored approach to improving the attendance of any pupils whose attendance causes concern.

A thoughtfully planned extra-curricular programme broadens pupils' understanding of the world and prepares them for life in modern Britain. Voting for members of the pupil parliament helps pupils understand democracy. Visiting speakers from a range of professions give pupils insight into possible career choices. Pupils learn about a range of world religions. They are tolerant and appreciative of religious and other differences.

Governors know the school well. They support and challenge leaders in their drive for continuous improvement. There have been significant changes in personnel at the school. However, the new leadership team has made a positive impact in a short space of time. Staff are supportive of leaders. They feel valued and appreciate the way leaders look after their well-being.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- There are inconsistencies in the way teachers check pupils' learning, address misconceptions and provide pupils with the time and information needed to improve their written work. As a result, some pupils do not make the improvements needed to progress well. The school should ensure that teachers use all aspects of assessment effectively so that all pupils are supported to achieve the ambitious aims of the curriculum.

Background

When we have judged a school to be outstanding, we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains outstanding. 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 would now receive a higher or lower grade, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection, which 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 outstanding in September 2018.

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	117467
Local authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	10323651
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	251
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Michael Cranfield
Headteacher	Laura Murphy
Website	www.standrews.herts.sch.uk
Dates of previous inspection	26 and 27 September 2018, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- There have been several recent changes to the senior leadership team. The headteacher took up post in September 2023, the deputy headteacher took up post in January 2024 and the special educational needs coordinator (SENCo) joined the school in February 2024.
- The headteacher was unable to be present for the duration of the inspection.
- The school does not use any alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

- Inspections are a point-in-time judgement 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 has taken that into account in her evaluation of the school.
- The inspector met with a range of leaders, including the deputy headteacher, the SENCo, the school business manager and governors, including the chair. The

inspector also spoke with the local authority's school effectiveness adviser on the telephone.

- The inspector carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics and geography. For each deep dive, the inspector discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke with teachers and spoke with some pupils about their learning. The inspector looked at samples of pupils' work. The inspector listened to several pupils read to a familiar adult. She also looked at samples of pupils' work in other subject areas.
- 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 school documents and policies. These included the school development plan and minutes of governing body meetings.
- The inspector reviewed the responses to Ofsted's parent survey, Ofsted Parent View, and the responses to Ofsted's staff questionnaire. She also spoke with pupils, parents and staff to gather their views on the school.

Inspection team

Caroline Crozier, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for children looked after, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

This publication is available at <http://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/>.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.gov.uk/ofsted

© Crown copyright 2024