

Inspection of a good school: St Peter's Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School

Church Lane, Mill End, Rickmansworth, Hertfordshire WD3 8HD

Inspection dates:

10 and 11 July 2024

Outcome

St Peter's Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

The school is a caring place with a distinctive family ethos. Pupils are happy and kept safe. With their families, they are made to feel welcome from day one. Staff provide pupils with positive role models for good behaviour and exemplify the importance of equality. Pupils look out for each other. Most behave very well. On the rare occasion that disputes arise, they are quickly sorted out. Pupils are thoughtful and caring, particularly if anyone is upset or left out.

Pupils thrive when there are high expectations for their achievements. This is particularly the case in reading and mathematics. Pupils learn clearly defined content and receive helpful support when they struggle. However, there are subjects for which pupils produce work that does not reflect their potential for building knowledge and skills.

Beyond the taught curriculum, pupils can join various clubs and activities. Older pupils enjoy playing chess and competing in sports teams. Pupils in key stage 1 and children in the early years like to be creative. They relish building models, drawing, music and movement. Pupils learn to respect different beliefs and cultures. They also develop leadership qualities through various roles and responsibilities as they get older.

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

The school provides a broad programme for all children from Nursery through to Year 6. This includes all required areas of learning in the early years and all national curriculum subjects. Effective planning ensures that pupils cover all necessary curriculum content. Imaginative links between subjects, including through the forest school, make learning interesting and enjoyable. These experiences are also accessible for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND).

In most subjects, particularly English and mathematics, teaching is well organised. Leaders thoroughly evaluate these subjects. This helps them to identify and resolve issues by fine tuning the curriculum and arranging staff training. For example, changes in mathematics have improved pupils' reasoning skills. Teachers typically present information clearly. This helps pupils to understand the lesson content.

Pupils with SEND have their needs accurately identified. This serves to identify barriers to learning and guide decision-making on the best support for them in lessons. For example, teaching assistants reiterate instructions and break down learning into smaller steps. This inclusive approach helps pupils with SEND access the same activities as their peers.

The way the school teaches some foundation subjects is not helping all pupils build strong knowledge and skills. Sometimes, the way that pupils' work is completed in some subjects makes it difficult for them to build on previous learning and remember what they have learned. The work produced by pupils in these subjects is not always as good as it could be. This also makes it difficult for staff to check what pupils have learned. The school is aware of these issues but has not yet made the changes needed to fully address them.

In Nursery, children develop strong language and communication skills. Learning to speak and listen well helps them start learning letter sounds from their first day in the Reception Year. This is supported by the school's successful phonics strategy. After the COVID-19 pandemic, leaders noticed that some areas of reading needed improvement. More pupils are now meeting the expected reading standards. Those who need extra help receive effective support. Pupils are enthusiastic readers and have access to a good variety of books in their classrooms and school libraries.

The school is proud of its pupils' good attendance and behaviour. Very few are frequently absent and most behave well both in and out of the classroom. Staff consistently model politeness and consideration. It helps pupils be attentive and respectful. Younger pupils may need reminders during key stage 1, but they develop into thoughtful and responsible pupils by the end of their time at St Peter's. By then, they are well prepared for secondary school.

The school takes some particularly creative approaches to pupils' personal development, including around environmental and spiritual matters. Pupils are chosen to be 'Wise Owls', leading others in discussion and thinking. Elections are held for the school council and for sports captains. This supports pupils' understanding of democracy and has a direct benefit on their behaviour and attitudes.

Staff are happy working at St Peter's. They appreciate the care taken with their workload and with their well-being. They work well as a team, supporting each other. The knowledgeable governing body plays an important part too, through supporting and challenging the school in equal measure.

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 way pupils complete their work makes it hard for them to review and build on prior knowledge. This also complicates assessment for staff and leaders, affecting the quality of pupils' work. The school should review curriculum planning and organisation to ensure that all subjects enable pupils to produce high-quality work that builds on their previous learning.

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 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 second ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be good in October 2014.

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	117448
Local authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	10336969
Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	238
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Malcolm Wilson
Headteacher	Michael Conley
Website	spmillend.herts.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	22 November 2018, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school is part of the Diocese of St Albans. The school has a religious character, Church of England, and was last inspected under section 48 of the Education Act 2005 on 4 May 2022. The school's next section 48 inspection will be within five school years of that date.
- The school does not make use of alternative provision.
- The school has before- and after-school childcare for pupils attending the school. It is run by school staff and managed by the governing body.

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 his evaluation of the school.
- The inspector carried out this ungraded inspection under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

- The inspector carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics, and computing. For each deep dive, the inspector held discussions about the curriculum, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. The inspector also listened to a sample of pupils reading to a familiar adult.
- The inspector discussed other aspects of the curriculum with leaders, looked at pupils' work, and visited classrooms in some other subjects.
- The inspector met with the headteacher and other members of the senior leadership team. He also met with the chair and other members of the local governing body.
- 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 met with a group of staff, and with pupils from across the school. He took account of 61 responses to Ofsted's inspection survey for pupils, 15 responses to Ofsted's inspection survey for school staff and 86 responses to Ofsted's parent survey, Ofsted Parent View.

Inspection team

Mark Phillips, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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