

Inspection of Pulham Church of England Primary School

Harleston Road, Pulham Market, Diss, Norfolk IP21 4SZ

Inspection dates:	10 and 11 June 2025
The quality of education	Requires improvement
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Requires improvement
Early years provision	Requires improvement
Previous inspection grade	Requires improvement

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils enjoy coming to school and feel safe, valued and supported. They describe their school as a friendly and welcoming place, where everyone is encouraged to 'shine their light'. The school helps pupils to express their emotions and feel understood.

Expectations for pupils' achievement are increasingly high. However, these expectations are not realised in some subjects.

Pupils behave well in lessons and around the school. They are polite, courteous and generally eager to learn. They enjoy a wide range of clubs and enrichment activities, including forest school, coding and drawing club. Trips to places like a local castle and opportunities to take part in high ropes activities help bring learning to life and build pupils' confidence.

The school promotes a strong sense of community. Pupils take part in local events, such as the village carnival and horticultural show. They raise money for charities in creative ways. Pupils are proud of their school and enjoy the opportunities it gives them to grow academically, socially and emotionally.

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

The school has taken important steps to improve the quality of education. It has introduced an ambitious and well-structured curriculum in some subjects, such as mathematics. This was after identifying that what was in place before was not working well enough.

The school's approach to teaching phonics is now well established and effective. Pupils who fall behind in phonics receive targeted support to help them catch up. This helps more pupils become fluent readers and significantly improves their confidence to read. However, the school has not ensured that its approach to teaching reading comprehension is developed well enough. Consequently, while pupils enjoy reading whole-class texts and books from the library, their ability to understand and discuss what they read in depth is not developed as well as it should be. This has contributed to pupils' lower outcomes in national reading tests in key stage 2. Similarly, the school has not ensured that teachers use a consistent and effective approach to teaching writing. As a result, pupils' handwriting is sometimes poorly formed or lacks fluency, which affects the overall quality of their written work.

Teachers have not received all the training and support they need to deliver the school's curriculum consistently well. As a result, pupils do not always secure knowledge in enough depth or produce high-quality work.

The school has started to improve its work to identify and meet the needs of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Parents and carers are positive about the school's work. Recently, the school has revised the way that it develops plans to meet the needs of individual pupils. The school thinks about how to match its support to pupils'

specific needs. However, the school does not make certain that pupils with SEND learn subject curriculums well.

In the early years, children benefit from a well-organised classroom. In some areas of learning, the school has established a well-thought-out curriculum. Children benefit from the school's effective phonics teaching. However, the school does not think carefully enough about how it will build children's knowledge and help them to practise what they know, such as through play. Sometimes, the school does not develop children's independence, communication and problem-solving skills effectively.

Pupils' behaviour is a strength of the school. They are respectful, friendly and typically engaged. Pupils understand the school's expectations and respond well to routines. Attendance is strong and the school works proactively with families to address persistent absences.

The school offers a rich programme of personal development. Pupils benefit from a wide range of clubs, trips and outdoor learning opportunities. Opportunities to learn new skills in the school's woodland area is a particular highlight, helping pupils develop teamwork, resilience and a love of nature. Pupils learn about important topics, such as healthy relationships, online safety and emotional well-being. They discuss sensitive topics with maturity and respect.

The school promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well through assemblies and community events. For example, pupils take part in activities linked to Black History Month and awareness of neurodiversity. Pupils engage in charity work that fosters their empathy and understanding.

Leaders, including governors, are committed to improving the school and have started to take successful action to improve the school. However, progress has not been rapid enough. For example, the school has had to revise the curriculum more than once to find an approach that works. Governors understand the school's strengths and areas for development. They have supported the school through a period of significant change and are clear about the need for further improvement.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The school has not ensured that it has an effective enough approach to developing pupils' writing. This means that pupils sometimes form letters inaccurately or produce handwriting that is not of a high standard. The school should ensure a clear and

consistent approach to handwriting is implemented consistently well across the school, so that pupils' handwriting is of high quality.

- The school does not have a well-developed approach to teaching reading comprehension. This means pupils' understanding of what they are reading is often not deep enough, especially in key stage 2. This also means that pupils do not achieve as well as they should in reading. The school should ensure that an effective approach to teaching reading comprehension is fully implemented, so that pupils develop a rich and deep comprehension of what they read.
- Some of the school's curriculum in the early years, key stages 1 and 2 is not taught well because teachers have not received the challenge, guidance and support they need to do so. As a result, pupils do not consistently secure knowledge in sufficient depth or produce work of a high quality. The school should ensure that teachers receive the support they need to deliver the intended curriculum effectively and enable pupils to produce high-quality work and achieve well across all areas of the curriculum.

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	121051
Local authority	Norfolk
Inspection number	10378488
Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	103
Appropriate authority	Governing body
Chair of governors	Gillian Hipwell
Headteacher	Harriet Beckett
Website	www.pulham.norfolk.sch.uk
Dates of previous inspection	15 and 16 November 2022, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school does not use any alternative provision.
- The headteacher took up her substantive role in February 2022.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005. During a graded inspection, we grade the school for each of our key judgements (quality of education; behaviour and attitudes; personal development; and leadership and management) and for any relevant provision judgement (early years and/or sixth form provision). Schools receiving a graded inspection from September 2024 will not be given an overall effectiveness grade.

- 🔍 Inspections are a point-in-time evaluation about the quality of a school's education provision.
- 🔍 Inspectors discussed any continued impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.

- ② The lead inspector met with representatives of the local authority and governing body, including the chair and vice-chair.
- ② Inspectors met with the headteacher and other staff members.
- ② Inspectors conducted further meetings with the school regarding safeguarding, early years, SEND, attendance and provision for pupils' personal development.
- ② Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: reading, mathematics, art and design and history. For each deep dive, inspectors 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.
- ② Inspectors also considered the curriculum in other subjects.
- ② Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour in lessons, around school and at social times.
- ② 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.
- ② Inspectors considered responses to Ofsted's pupil survey and Ofsted's staff survey. They considered responses to Ofsted Parent View, including free-text comments.



Inspection team

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