

Inspection of a good school: Birchanger Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School

Birchwood, Birchanger, Bishop's Stortford, Hertfordshire CM23 5QL

Inspection dates:

5 May 2022

Outcome

Birchanger Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are happy and feel safe at school. They care for each other and enjoy learning together. Pupils agree that lessons are calm and pupils can concentrate on their studies. During breaktime and lunchtime, pupils move around the school sensibly and demonstrate the high levels of responsibility staff expect.

Pupils told us that bullying does not happen at the school. Pupils appreciate the work of the Year 5 'anti-bullying' champions. When pupils occasionally fall out with their friends, staff provide helpful support so that pupils find their own solutions. Pupils learn well about their own emotional needs and how to regulate their responses to social situations. They confidently identify the emotions they are feeling. When pupils' negative feelings get 'too big', they know to share with staff, who provide effective help.

Pupils work hard and learn well. Pupils enjoy the regular celebrations of success that they experience at school. Pupils are very proud of their work. They are being well prepared for life when they move on from primary school.

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

Leaders have designed a well-organised curriculum that aims to prepare pupils for 'Life in all its fullness'. Staff methodically and consistently follow leaders' guidance. Teachers make sure that pupils understand and review what they have studied. Staff use simple and effective ways to identify when pupils do not understand or have forgotten something. Staff act swiftly when pupils need support in their learning. Pupils learn and remember what they have been taught.

Leaders encourage staff to be curious and look for ways to improve pupils' learning at the school. Teachers have good subject knowledge and are well trained to deliver the curriculum effectively. At times, members of support staff do not have the subject knowledge needed to help pupils as effectively.

Pupils become capable readers who love books. Children in Reception and pupils in Year 1 quickly learn what they need to read confidently and accurately. Staff give pupils who find reading hard the support they need to read well. Pupils regularly recommend books to their friends and talk outside of lessons about their reading. Staff closely check what pupils are reading to ensure that pupils are reading books that are not too hard or too easy.

Staff provide well for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Staff are effectively trained to identify quickly and accurately when pupils find learning difficult. Pupils value the additional support they get, when they need it, and they use the strategies staff teach them to overcome any difficulties with learning. As a result, pupils with SEND become increasingly independent and successful learners.

Leaders have established a community founded on the school values of love and care for all. Staff teach pupils to value the different lifestyles and beliefs. Leaders have placed great importance on giving pupils opportunities to take responsibility for themselves, their school and their community. Leaders' success is evident in the good behaviour of pupils during lessons. Pupils also serve in many roles that help with the daily running of the school as well as with the school's improvement. For example, pupils lead clubs for other pupils and the active student council play a substantial role in shaping school policies.

Staff are confident in the leadership of the school. All staff responded on Ofsted's online survey for staff that they are proud to work at this school and feel well supported. They told us that leaders manage staff workload well.

In discussion with the headteacher, the inspectors agreed that improving the subject knowledge of support staff may usefully serve as a focus for the next inspection.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Staff are well trained and know the risks that pupils may face in their lives. Staff look for signs of potential harm and act swiftly when concerns arise. They understand and use leaders' system for reporting concerns.

Leaders maintain safeguarding records carefully. Leaders ensure that pupils receive effective provision, including that required by supporting agencies.

Leaders check the backgrounds of adults at the school to ensure suitability for working with children.

Governors hold leaders to account for the safeguarding practices at the school.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Members of support staff have gaps in their subject knowledge. This means that they do not identify where pupils need more support or have misconceptions in their learning. Leaders need to provide support staff with training so that they have sufficient subject knowledge that can support pupils effectively.

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 a section 8 inspection of a good or outstanding school, because it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on a section 8 inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school would now receive a higher or lower grade, then the next inspection will be a section 5 inspection. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the section 8 inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the section 8 inspection as a section 5 inspection immediately.

This is the first section 8 inspection since we judged the school to be good in February 2017.

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.

If you are the school and you are not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

In the report, '[disadvantaged pupils](#)' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route.

School details

Unique reference number	115127
Local authority	Essex
Inspection number	10211396
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	The governing body
Chair	Ben Stickley and Elaine Wright
Headteacher	Claire Berry
Website	www.birchanger.essex.sch.uk
Dates of previous inspection	7 and 8 February 2017, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- This is a voluntary controlled Church of England school. The school's report from its section 48 inspection on 6 February 2019 is on the school's website.
- This school is smaller than the average-sized primary school.

Information about this inspection

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors spoke with the headteacher, members of the senior leadership team, the special educational needs coordinator, a representative from the local authority, members of the governing body, teachers, support staff and pupils.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: mathematics, physical education and reading. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.

- Inspectors scrutinized the school's record of checks made to ensure that adults at the school are suitable to work with children. Inspectors also scrutinized leaders' child protection records. To consider the extent to which pupils feel safe, inspectors considered comments from parents and pupils along with Ofsted's online survey, Ofsted Parent View, and Ofsted's online survey of pupils' views.

Inspection team

Al Mistrano, lead inspector

Sharon Waldron

Her Majesty's Inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

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