

Inspection of a good school: St Alphege Church of England Infant School

Oxford Street, Whitstable, Kent CT5 1DA

Inspection dates:

2 and 3 February 2023

Outcome

St Alphege Church of England Infant School continues to be a good school. There is enough evidence of improved performance to suggest that the school could be judged outstanding if we were to carry out a graded (section 5) inspection now. The school's next inspection will be a graded inspection.

What is it like to attend this school?

St Alphege is a vibrant, friendly and welcoming school. All pupils are loved, valued, cared for and nurtured. As a result, pupils are exceptionally happy at school and thrive from the time they start in Nursery or Reception. The pupils' best interests are at the heart of everything the school does. Leaders and staff are ambitious for all pupils, including those who are disadvantaged or pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND).

The school's values underpin its work and are embedded into pupils' experiences. Pupils demonstrate these values in abundance. They are kind, caring and considerate of others. They understand, accept and respect the fact that some pupils have different needs and different ways of learning.

Expectations are high and this is reflected in pupils' excellent behaviour and their positive attitudes to school. They develop as curious individuals with a thirst for finding out new things. Pupils feel very safe in school. They know they can talk to adults if they are worried about anything. If anyone is unkind, they know to say, 'Stop, I don't like that.'

Parents are overwhelmingly positive about the school and its leadership. They describe the school as 'a special place to be'.

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

Leaders are relentless and passionate in the pursuit of excellence. All decisions are based on what is best for the pupils. Leaders have created a rich, inspiring and well-designed curriculum. It fires pupils' interests and imagination. In all subjects, the essential skills and knowledge that pupils should learn are clearly set out so that pupils can build on

these successfully. There is a particular focus on encouraging pupils' creativity and learning through the arts.

Subject leaders are very knowledgeable. They provide expert support and guidance to ensure that teachers have excellent subject knowledge. Teachers explain new learning well and they astutely pick up any misunderstandings. They question carefully to secure pupils' understanding. Teachers make sure pupils have plenty of opportunities to practise what they have been taught and to understand the purpose of their learning. For example, in art, pupils described mixing paint to make different shades of a colour, 'because the sky is not just one shade of blue and leaves aren't always the same green.' Pupils' vocabulary is developed and enriched very well in all subjects.

By the end of key stage 1, pupils reach the expected outcomes in reading, writing and mathematics. This demonstrates pupils' very strong progress given that many children begin school with starting points below what might be expected and the gaps in pupils' learning due to the pandemic. Pupils benefit from a wide range of enrichment activities that broaden their experiences beyond their immediate environment and culture. These include a wide range of clubs, visits and visitors. Pupils enjoy the responsibilities they are given in school. They know that their opinions are valued and acted on. Subsequently, pupils develop a depth of learning, curiosity, independence, resilience and skills that prepare them well for the next stage of their education.

Staff are ambitious for pupils with SEND. Leaders are quick to identify pupils' needs and work very closely with parents. Staff adapt learning expertly and provide appropriate support and resources to ensure that all pupils learn the curriculum and achieve their personal best. The school is highly inclusive and leaders provide a bespoke curriculum and specific nurture and support when needed.

Children get off to a flying start in reading. In Nursery, there are regular opportunities to look at books, listen to stories and learn rhymes and songs, all of which children love. Phonics is taught very effectively from the start of Reception. Children quickly learn the sounds they need to help them read. Pupils read books that closely match the sounds they know. Staff identify pupils who are at risk of falling behind swiftly and give them extra help to catch up and keep up. Once pupils read accurately, teachers develop their fluency very well. A love of reading is promoted all around the school as well as in the reading hut and all outdoor learning spaces. Pupils have opportunities to read a wide range of books. Pupils develop as confident and fluent readers, with skills to access the wider curriculum.

There is a strong culture of support and teamwork among staff. They appreciate that leaders are always considerate of their workload and well-being. Staff feel valued and exceptionally proud to work at the school. The skills and expertise of the executive headteacher and the head of school are widely acknowledged in the local area and beyond.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

There is an extremely strong culture of safeguarding in the school. Pupils' well-being and safety are priorities for everyone. Staff are well trained. They know pupils and their families very well and so are quick to identify any signs that a child may be at risk of harm. Leaders make sure that staff know exactly what to do if they have a concern. Leaders are tenacious in their work and liaise closely with external agencies to ensure that pupils and their families receive the support they need. The required checks are made on adults who work in the school.

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 first ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be good in November 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.

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	118659
Local authority	Kent
Inspection number	10256489
Type of school	Infant
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	3 to 7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	188
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Paula Trewin
Headteacher	Liz Thomas-Friend (Executive headteacher) Jacqui Spinks (Head of school)
Website	https://www.st-alphege.kent.sch.uk
Dates of previous inspection	21 and 22 November 2017, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- St Alphege is a Church of England School in the Diocese of Canterbury. The school's last section 48 inspection, for schools of a religious character, was in March 2020. The school's next section 48 inspection will take place within eight years of the date of this inspection.
- The school does not currently use any alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. The inspector discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and has taken that into account in her evaluation of the school.
- The inspector met with the executive headteacher and the head of school, the inclusion leader, other leaders and staff.
- The inspector met with members of the governing body, including the chair, and received two letters from other governors who could not attend the meeting. She also held telephone conversations with the local authority school improvement adviser and a representative from the diocese.

- The inspector carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics, and art and design. For each deep dive, the inspector met with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, talked to some pupils and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- The inspector also looked at curriculum information in other subjects and observed some pupils reading to teachers or teaching assistants.
- To inspect safeguarding, the inspector spoke with leaders, staff and pupils. She looked at the single central record of recruitment checks and safeguarding records. Throughout the inspection, the inspector considered and checked the culture of safeguarding in the school.
- The inspector reviewed a range of documents, including the school improvement plan and the school's own evaluation of its effectiveness.
- The inspector observed pupils' behaviour in lessons and around the school. She talked to pupils about their learning and gathered pupils' views about what behaviour is like and whether they feel safe in school.
- The inspector considered the responses from Ofsted's online surveys for staff, pupils and parents. She spoke to some parents at the start of the school day.

Inspection team

Margaret Coussins, lead inspector

Ofsted 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 2023