

St Alphege Church of England Infant School

Oxford Street, Whitstable, Kent CT5 1DA

Inspection dates

21–22 November 2017

Overall effectiveness	Good
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Outstanding
Outcomes for pupils	Good
Early years provision	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- The executive headteacher and head of school have galvanised the whole school community in the last 18 months. Their ambitious vision for the school, underpinned by Christian values, has won the trust and confidence of parents and staff.
- Pupils achieve outcomes in reading, writing, mathematics and science that are in line with national averages. Consequently, pupils are prepared well for their next steps.
- Disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities make strong progress from their starting points.
- Teachers make skilful use of questioning and challenging activities to probe pupils' understanding. Pupils rise to their teachers' high expectations and try their best at all times.
- Teachers build strong, nurturing relationships with their pupils. As a result, pupils feel safe and are happy in school.
- Pupils behave impeccably. They are polite to their teachers, courteous to visitors and considerate to each other.
- Pupils relish the opportunities they have to extend their interests and gain new skills through interesting clubs and activities.
- Pupils are tolerant and open-minded. They know that it is wrong to discriminate against groups or individuals. They are interested in finding out about cultures and beliefs that are different from their own.
- The school makes strong provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development through a broad, balanced and exciting curriculum.
- Children in the early years make strong progress, achieve above-average outcomes and enjoy their learning because teaching meets their needs.
- Governors provide effective strategic oversight of all areas of the school's work, including the impact of additional funding.
- Leaders with responsibility for specific areas of the school's work do not always evaluate the impact of their actions sharply enough.
- Leaders recognise that not enough pupils achieve a greater depth of understanding in mathematics.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve rates of progress for all pupils, in particular the most able, by ensuring that leaders at all levels evaluate the impact of their actions with greater precision so that they have a more accurate picture of where additional challenge is needed.
- Ensure that more pupils achieve the higher standard in mathematics by the end of key stage 1.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- The executive headteacher and head of school have formed an effective partnership over the 18 months that they have been leading the school. Following a period of turbulence in the school's history, they have brought stability, energy and a clarity of purpose. The school's explicit Christian values lie at the heart of leaders' commitment to the success and well-being of every pupil.
- Parents are full of praise for the improvements that the executive headteacher and head of school have made. Nearly all of the parents who responded to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, believe that the school is well led and that their children are safe, happy and making good progress. One parent wrote: 'The strength lies in the management team and the united staff approach to the improvement of standards. I am so very grateful that I entrusted my child's first experience of education to this school.'
- Staff morale is high because leaders invest in their well-being, training and development. All those members of staff who responded to the staff survey indicated that they are proud to work at the school, and that leaders take into account the impact of their decisions on teachers' workload. Teachers confirm that they receive training that helps them to improve their skills. They particularly value the opportunity to work with colleagues in other local schools, for example when comparing assessments of pupils' work.
- Leaders' high expectations and drive for continual improvement permeate the school. The impact of this can be seen in the care with which teachers plan for pupils' individual learning needs, and in the stimulating classroom environments that they create for their pupils. As a result, pupils enjoy their learning, and the majority make good progress towards their targets.
- Subject leaders and those responsible for specific areas of the school's work share and promote the senior leaders' vision for the school. They undertake additional training, and provide effective support to classroom teachers. They check pupils' progress and put in place appropriate support if any pupil falls behind. As a result of their work on the curriculum and approaches to teaching, standards in the school are rising rapidly. However, leaders' evaluations of the impact of their actions sometimes lack the necessary precision that would enable them to promote even more rapid progress for pupils, in particular the most able.
- Leaders make sure that pupils follow a broad, balanced and exciting curriculum. Leaders base their decisions about the curriculum on the demands of the national curriculum, on evidence of effective practice in other schools and on their own analysis of what pupils in this school need. Leaders place a particular emphasis on outdoor learning, the arts and creativity. The school has won national recognition for its promotion of the arts. One parent commented: 'We particularly value the emphasis placed on the arts, which has really helped to keep our child engaged.'
- A wide range of lunchtime and after-school clubs, which include fencing, archery and dance, complement the curriculum. Pupils talk about and take part in these clubs enthusiastically. Leaders monitor attendance at these clubs carefully and make every

effort to ensure that disadvantaged pupils benefit from these wider opportunities. Last year, three quarters of pupils in key stage 1 regularly attended a club. Leaders make judicious use of the physical education (PE) and sport premium to promote participation in physical activity, including competitive sport with other schools.

- Leaders make strong provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Pupils have a keen awareness of their responsibilities towards other members of the community. In religious education (RE), pupils learn about Christianity and other world religions. They also reflect on moral issues such as animal cruelty. Pupils have access to rich cultural experiences, for example the annual play that Year 2 pupils write and perform in the local theatre.
- Leaders make effective use of the pupil premium and special educational needs funding to remove barriers to learning for vulnerable pupils and enable them to make rapid progress from their starting points. Leaders base their decisions about the spending of this additional funding on evidence of which approaches have been successful in other schools. Leaders regularly review the impact of interventions and change them promptly if they are not having the desired outcomes.
- Leaders ensure that pupils understand, and have the opportunity to discuss, British values. Leaders also ensure that pupils live out these values in practice, for example in the regular school council sessions. As a result, pupils are prepared well for life in modern Britain.

Governance of the school

- Governance is effective. Governors have a clear understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. They confirm the accuracy of what leaders tell them when they visit the school and talk to leaders, teachers and pupils. They ask searching questions of leaders, particularly in relation to the impact of the use of pupil premium, funding for pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities and the PE and sport premium.
- Governors are strong custodians of the school's Christian values and inclusive ethos. They are passionate about the school and its place in the local community. They are ambitious for pupils' outcomes as well as for their emotional well-being.
- A governor with responsibility for safeguarding checks that all child protection policies and procedures are followed, including for the recruitment of staff. Governors are also diligent in keeping their own training in safeguarding, and other areas of the school's work, up to date. A recent external review of the school's use of pupil premium has strengthened governors' oversight of the progress of disadvantaged pupils.
- Governors provide strong and decisive strategic leadership. They have made sensible changes to their meeting arrangements to enable them to focus more sharply on the impact of leaders' actions. Governors have taken effective action to ensure that the school's finances are sustainable.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. There is a strong culture of safeguarding in the school. Leaders carry out all required checks on the suitability of all those who work or volunteer in the school diligently. Staff and governors receive

regular child protection training, including guidance on keeping pupils safe from radicalisation and child sexual exploitation. Staff are always vigilant and know what to do if they have any concerns about a pupil's welfare.

- Leaders keep detailed records of all child protection concerns and they ensure that these records are stored securely. Leaders have established strong relationships with a range of outside agencies, including social services. They are tenacious in ensuring that vulnerable pupils and their families receive timely and effective support from these agencies.
- Pupils say that they feel safe and know how to keep themselves safe, for example when using the internet. Pupils are considerate to each other in class and play together harmoniously in the playground. A trained well-being team works effectively to identify and provide appropriate support for any pupils who may be experiencing emotional difficulties.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Pupils respond to their teachers' high expectations by working as hard as they can and participating willingly in all activities. Relationships between staff and pupils are warm, and pupils have extremely positive attitudes to their learning.
- Teaching consistently meets the needs of all pupils. Teachers make careful use of assessment information to identify next steps for each pupil. Pupils receive clear feedback on what they have done well and on what they need to do next, in line with the school's policy. Pupils are keen to learn from their mistakes and they make good use of the time they are given to improve their work.
- Teachers go to great lengths to make the learning accessible, practical and enjoyable for all pupils. In particular, imaginative use is made of outdoor spaces to enhance pupils' learning experience.
- Pupils make strong progress across the curriculum because the teaching of new skills is well planned and methodical. For example, in art, pupils in Year 2 were engrossed in trying to capture the subtle tones and shades of the sea and sky in their paintings.
- Teaching is also effective in helping pupils to grasp and explain new concepts. For example, in mathematics, the teacher's skilful questioning enabled key stage 1 pupils to deepen their understanding of 'more than' and 'less than'. In English, a structured approach to writing enabled pupils to succeed in writing accurately, at increasing length and in a variety of styles.
- Teaching assistants work closely with teachers and provide effective support to pupils who need to catch up and those who have SEN and/or disabilities. These pupils take part in the full curriculum and make good progress because of the well-targeted interventions and timely support that they receive.
- Lively classroom displays provide pupils with helpful resources and ideas that enable them to be more self-reliant in their learning. Pupils' work is neat and well presented. Well-established classroom routines mean that little time is lost as pupils move between activities.
- Over 90% of parents who responded to Ofsted's online survey believe that they get valuable information from the school about their children's progress. A similar

proportion of parents think that their children receive appropriate homework for their age.

- Leaders recognise that teaching does not always provide enough challenge for the most able pupils. Leaders and teachers are taking effective action to address this by identifying the most able pupils earlier in their school career and tracking their progress more carefully.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Outstanding

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding.
- Pupils have many opportunities to take responsibility and contribute to the life of the school. For example, members of the school council wrote a pupils' version of the current school development plan. They meet with leaders regularly to discuss progress against this plan. Another group of pupils have responsibility for the attractive displays at the school's entrance.
- The school's strong commitment to pupils' personal development can be seen in the wide range of interesting clubs, trips and events that teachers organise. Pupils talk with great excitement about the clubs they attend, for example, fencing and performing arts. Year 2 pupils write and perform an annual play in the local theatre, an event that pupils and parents alike look forward to with anticipation. Leaders track pupils' participation in these activities, and make imaginative use of the pupil premium to ensure that disadvantaged pupils are included.
- Pupils feel safe and know how to stay safe, including when using the internet. They know who to talk to if they are worried about anything. They like and trust their teachers. Pupils are not concerned about bullying. They say that pupils are very rarely mean or spiteful to each other, and that teachers resolve any squabbles quickly if they arise.
- Pupils are tolerant and welcoming of people who have different backgrounds or cultures from their own. They enjoy learning about the customs and practices of different religions in RE lessons. They say that their school is like a family.
- Pupils have a clear understanding of healthy lifestyles. The school makes strong provision for PE. Pupils enjoy joining in with games and sports in school. The school also has regard for pupils' emotional welfare. The well-being team is effective in supporting vulnerable pupils. The work of this team is valued by parents.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding.
- Pupils are excellent ambassadors for their school. They talk about their school and their teachers with great warmth. They are keen to tell visitors all about their work and the many activities that they take part in.
- Pupils' conduct in lessons and in the playground is outstanding. In lessons, they concentrate hard and complete all their work with determination and enthusiasm. They

follow their teachers' instructions promptly and cheerfully. At playtimes and lunchtimes, they are considerate towards one another and treat their environment responsibly.

- Rates of attendance for all pupils are in line with national averages for primary schools. Absence rates for disadvantaged pupils and those who have SEN and/or disabilities have fallen sharply and, since September, have been in line with national averages for all pupils. Attendance has a high profile in the school. There are awards for pupils whose attendance is consistently above average, and attendance is highlighted in newsletters and at parents' evenings. Leaders work effectively with the families of the few pupils who do not come to school regularly enough. Consequently, rates of attendance for all groups of pupils are improving rapidly.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- For the last two years, the proportion of pupils who reached the expected standard in reading, writing, mathematics and science at the end of key stage 1 has been at, or above, the national averages for these subjects. The proportion of pupils who achieved scores above the expected standard rose sharply between 2016 and 2017. Provisional results for 2017 show that the proportions of pupils achieving greater depth in reading and writing were in line with the national figures. However, a lower proportion of pupils than that found nationally attained the higher standard in mathematics, despite a significant improvement on the 2016 score in this measure.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils achieving the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics has been variable over time. In 2016, outcomes in reading and writing for disadvantaged pupils were in line with national averages for other pupils. Provisional results for 2017 show that fewer disadvantaged pupils achieved the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics than other pupils nationally. However, the school's own analysis is credible in demonstrating that, in 2017, the majority of disadvantaged pupils made strong progress from their often low starting points.
- In 2017, a higher proportion of pupils than that found nationally achieved the expected standard in the Year 1 phonics screening check, while the proportion of disadvantaged pupils achieving the expected standard exceeded the national average for other pupils. Typically, by the end of year 2, virtually all pupils have reached the expected standard in the phonics screening check.
- Across key stage 1, current pupils make strong progress in English, mathematics and a range of subjects. This is particularly evident in Year 2. Leaders have ensured that pupils follow a broad and balanced curriculum that pupils find highly motivating.
- In English, pupils do well because teachers focus on the basics of reading and writing and give pupils rich opportunities to read and write at length. They also learn how to enrich their use of language by developing a wider vocabulary. For example, Year 2 pupils enjoyed thinking of synonyms for 'sad', with their ideas ranging from 'glum' to 'heartbroken'.
- In mathematics, pupils develop their skills and understanding well because teachers give them regular practice in basic skills and problem-solving.

- In science, a well-designed curriculum enables pupils to understand scientific principles and to develop their practical skills. For example, a recent science week gave pupils experience in carrying out investigations, designing fair tests and drawing valid conclusions.
- Scrutiny of pupils' work shows that disadvantaged pupils currently in the school make steady progress from their starting points. Leaders make good use of the pupil premium in order to remove barriers to learning for these pupils. For example, the use of practical apparatus in mathematics enables those disadvantaged pupils with low starting points to keep up with their peers. As a result, there is no discernible difference in the current rates of progress made by disadvantaged pupils compared to other pupils in the school.
- Pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities make good progress from their starting points because teaching meets their needs well. In addition, teaching assistants skilfully tailor the work to the needs of individuals or groups of pupils so that they are able to learn the same topics as their peers.
- The most able pupils, including the most able disadvantaged pupils, thrive because of the rich and varied curriculum. These pupils make very strong progress overall, particularly in reading and writing. However, leaders are keenly aware that these pupils need even greater levels of challenge if they are to achieve a greater depth of understanding, particularly in mathematics.
- The school makes effective provision for reading. Pupils read regularly in school and at home. The majority of pupils read with fluency and expression, while those who are less confident use their phonics knowledge well to sound out unfamiliar words. Pupils help to run the library, which is well used. Teachers keep careful records of pupils' progress in reading and direct pupils to books that are appropriate to their reading ability.
- Pupils are prepared well for the next stage of their education because they make strong progress in their learning. They follow a broad and balanced curriculum that is taught well by committed staff. In addition, pupils achieve overall outcomes that are at least in line with those achieved by their peers nationally.

Early years provision

Good

- Children get off to a flying start to their education because the curriculum in the early years is well matched to their needs. Leaders are ambitious that all of the children in their care will achieve well, be happy and stay safe.
- Leaders assess children's starting points accurately. Over the last year, leaders have improved the systems for tracking children's progress from their starting points. These systems are helping to improve the quality of provision.
- The proportion of children achieving a good level of development by the end of Reception is above the national average. Leaders rightly attribute these above-average outcomes to improvements in the quality of teaching and closer checking of children's progress. Most children currently in the Reception class are on track to achieve a good level of development at the end of this year. Consequently, children are prepared well for Year 1.

- Disadvantaged children and those who have SEN and/or disabilities make strong progress because adults identify their needs promptly and ensure that effective interventions are in place. Staff make good use of external agencies to supplement the support offered in school. Parents of children who have SEN and/or disabilities are highly appreciative of the lengths that staff go to, to meet their children's needs.
- Children enjoy the wide range of interesting and exciting activities that adults provide for them, both indoors and outside. Activities are carefully planned to match children's interests and to support their speech and language and their physical development. For example, in a PE lesson, children in Reception had great fun learning to move at different speeds and in different directions without bumping into each other.
- Children develop very positive attitudes to learning and are able to concentrate for sustained periods of time. For example, in Reception, children used large wooden blocks to build a stable for the baby Jesus. They then took time to draw and write their plans on a whiteboard.
- Teachers promote children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well. In Reception, children were quiet and respectful when learning about the story of the nativity. The teacher successfully instilled in children a sense of awe and wonder at the scene in the stable.
- Children learn to share and take care of themselves. Children in both Nursery and Reception enjoy social snack times in small groups. They clear away their own cups and plates and wash them up proficiently and independently.
- Adults are generally effective in helping children to develop and extend their thinking. For example, in the Nursery class, children explored a selection of fresh herbs, skilfully supported by an adult who suggested that they use their senses to rub, smell and compare the plants. Outside, children hammered golf tees into a watermelon while an adult encouraged them to talk about the physical skills they were using.
- Relationships between children and adults are warm, friendly and positive. The environment is nurturing and children are encouraged to care for and help each other. Children's achievements are noticed and praised by adults. Consequently, children behave well and take pride in their work.

School details

Unique reference number	118659
Local authority	Kent
Inspection number	10037825

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

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	211
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Simon Coulton
Executive headteacher	Liz Thomas-Friend
Head of school	Jacqui Spinks
Telephone number	01227 272977
Website	www.st-alphege.kent.sch.uk
Email address	headteacher@st-alphege.kent.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	9–10 July 2013

Information about this school

- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.
- The school is an average-sized infant school.
- Most pupils are of White British background.
- The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is below the national average.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is below the national average.
- The proportion of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities is broadly average.
- There is a Nursery, led and managed by the school.
- The school manages its own breakfast club.

- The previous headteacher left the school in 2015. The then deputy headteacher was appointed to the post of head of school. She was supported in this role by a local headteacher for one year. Since September 2016, the executive headteacher has overseen the work of the head of school. The executive headteacher is also the substantive headteacher of a local infant school, and she divides her time between the two schools.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed all classes in key stage 1 and the early years. The majority of observations were carried out jointly with senior leaders.
- Inspectors held meetings with senior leaders, subject leaders and with a group of teachers.
- Inspectors met with members of the governing body, including the chair of governors.
- The lead inspector met with a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors met with pupils to discuss their views about school and heard them read.
- The views of parents were taken into account by analysing 67 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, and 15 free-text comments. Inspectors also spoke informally with parents at the start of both days of the inspection. Inspectors also took account of two hand-delivered letters.
- Inspectors considered the views of staff by analysing 20 responses to the staff survey.
- Inspectors scrutinised documentation, including the school's self-evaluation, minutes of governing body meetings and notes of external visits carried out by local authority officers.
- Inspectors evaluated pupils' learning over time by examining a sample of their work books.
- Safeguarding procedures were also reviewed, including arrangements for keeping pupils safe in school and for recruiting staff.

Inspection team

Gary Holden, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Claire Prince

Her Majesty's Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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Textphone: 0161 618 8524
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