

Inspection of a good school: Penshurst Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School

High Street, Penshurst, Tonbridge, Kent TN11 8BX

Inspection date:

17 November 2022

Outcome

Penshurst Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Staff have positive relationships with pupils. This helps pupils to be happy at school and enjoy their learning. They feel that the school is a caring place and know they can talk to an adult if they have a worry.

The school's Christian ethos and the leaders' ambitious drive are important parts of the school's aspiration for all pupils. Leaders want pupils to thrive academically but also to develop their personal qualities. For instance, they want pupils to be compassionate and show empathy in line with the school's mission, 'To walk in the shoes of others.'

Pupils know about bullying and the effects that it has. This is because the well-designed personal, social and health education programme supports pupils to understand the impact of a person's words and actions. Pupils rightly trust that the staff would deal well with any bullying if it happened. This helps pupils to feel safe in school.

Leaders have developed a purposeful and positive learning environment. Parents and carers appreciate the nurturing approach of staff, enabling their children to feel confident to try new things and do well. One parent summed up the thoughts of many parents, saying: 'My daughter loves Penshurst Primary and has really flourished since she joined.'

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

Leaders have put in place an ambitious and well-designed curriculum, ensuring coverage of the national curriculum requirements. They equip pupils with the essential skills and knowledge. This enables pupils to be successful academically and personally, preparing them well now and for the future, including pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Leaders have supported staff skilfully so that they know how to teach most subjects effectively. This is the case from the early years upwards. Staff understand

how much pupils know through the careful evaluation of their work and responses to questions. Teachers help pupils to remember what they have already learned. They challenge pupils to recall quickly what they know, while gaining new knowledge. This enables pupils to work efficiently on the work set for them. However, teachers' subject knowledge is not strong enough in some areas of the curriculum. As a result, pupils do not learn consistently well in all subjects.

Leaders have made sure that phonics is planned and taught well. Early reading is given a high priority in the school and is taught daily. In the Reception Year, children start to learn phonics during the first few days after they begin school. They learn the sounds that letters make in a logical order. The content in the reading curriculum for older pupils is well sequenced and adjusted according to the needs of the pupils. This makes sure that pupils acquire the knowledge that they need to read fluently and confidently. Pupils read a range of high-quality texts. This helps them to develop a love of reading. Teachers accurately check pupils' reading skills. If a gap in knowledge is identified, the next step in learning is adapted. Pupils are then taught the specific knowledge they need to help them progress.

Staff have a good understanding of the needs of pupils. The school identifies pupils with SEND well. Pupils with SEND achieve well because leaders, and staff more widely, have a comprehensive and accurate understanding of the needs of this group of pupils. Pupils are set aspirational targets to help them aim high. They are supported effectively to achieve these. Teachers adapt learning in lessons so that pupils with SEND learn well and experience success in different subjects. As a parent said of the help for their child: 'Penshurst have taken on board all his needs fantastically and his progress has been amazing.'

Pupils' conduct is good. This means that there is little low-level disruption. In lessons, most pupils are focused and show a positive attitude to their learning. Pupils interact positively with their peers and are respectful towards adults.

Pupils gain much from a wide range of opportunities to support their personal development. These include educational trips, clubs and visits. Pupils regularly organise and participate enthusiastically in school events. For instance, they enjoy taking a lead in planning the school's collective worship. Parents have extremely positive views of the school. They see the school as a 'family' and work together closely with the school to do the very best for the pupils.

Staff say that they are well supported by leaders. Staff confirm that their workload is considered carefully by leaders and governors. A member of staff reflected the thoughts of the broader staff team, saying: 'The headteacher and senior leadership team have an open-door policy and are as supportive as possible of staff.'

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders have developed a strong culture of safeguarding throughout the school. They train and support staff to identify any signs that may indicate a pupil is at risk of harm. Staff report concerns quickly. Leaders work with and seek guidance from outside agencies to make sure that pupils are kept safe. Record-keeping is thorough. This provides a comprehensive picture of pupils for whom the school has concerns.

The curriculum helps pupils to know how to keep safe, including when they are online. Leaders make the necessary checks to ensure that staff are safe to work in school.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Some subjects are not taught as effectively as most. This means that pupils do not achieve as well as they could across the full breadth of the national curriculum subjects. Leaders should provide effective support to improve teachers' subject knowledge so that they deliver the intended curriculum to a consistently high standard.

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 May 2013.

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	118720
Local authority	Kent
Inspection number	10241855
Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	85
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Reverend Lisa Cornell
Headteacher	Susan Elliott
Website	www.penshurstschool.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	11 July 2017, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- This is a Church of England primary school. The school's next section 48 Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools is due in the next two years. The last inspection of this type took place in September 2016.
- 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. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with school leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors met with the headteacher, a senior leader, subject leaders and the special educational needs coordinator. An inspector had a meeting with four governors, including the chair of the governing body.
- The lead inspector had telephone calls with a representative from the local authority and the diocese.
- Inspectors spoke with staff to discuss workload, well-being and safeguarding.

- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: reading, mathematics and art. 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.
- The inspectors also looked at curriculum information and pupils' work in other subjects.
- Inspectors spoke with pupils about their learning, safety and behaviour.
- Documentation relating to safeguarding was scrutinised by inspectors. This includes the single central record.
- Inspectors took account of the 41 responses to Ofsted Parent View, Ofsted's online survey, including the free-text comments. Inspectors also reviewed the 13 responses to the pupil survey and the 15 staff survey responses.

Inspection team

Richard Blackmore, lead inspector Ofsted Inspector

Jenny Ashley-Jones Ofsted Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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