

Inspection of a good school: Chilham, St Mary's Church of England Primary School

School Hill, Chilham, Canterbury, Kent CT4 8DE

Inspection date:

2 February 2022

Outcome

Chilham, St Mary's Church of England Primary School continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils enjoy coming to this small village school. They thrive in a caring, nurturing environment where everyone is included and encouraged to do their best. Pupils are happy at school. There is a family feel and a real sense of belonging to the school and the community. One parent said, 'There is such a strong, nurturing, family ethos that is firmly embedded in both the curriculum and wider school life.'

The school's Christian values of honesty, forgiveness, love, perseverance, trust and respect are at the heart of everything the school does. Pupils get on well with staff and with each other. Pupils say they make good friends and care about each other. They work and play together well. Older pupils are good role models for younger pupils.

Pupils have good attitudes to learning. They enjoy all the opportunities the school offers them, including the forest school, sports activities and being a 'Chilham Reader'. Pupils behave well and are polite and friendly. They feel safe in school. They do not worry about bullying but know that if they had problems, staff would deal with them well. They know there is always someone to talk to who would listen and help them.

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

Leaders are passionate about providing the best learning experiences for pupils. They have ensured that the curriculum is broad and ambitious. Leaders have identified the important knowledge and skills that pupils should learn in each subject. In mathematics, for example, knowledge and skills are sequenced well so that pupils build up their understanding as they move through the year groups.

Leaders make sure that what is taught is relevant and meaningful to their pupils. Recent changes in the curriculum are not yet fully embedded in the teaching of some subjects, such as geography, history and art. This means that while pupils generally achieve well, the depth of their knowledge and understanding is not always as developed as it might be. Teachers are effective at adapting the curriculum to take account of the impact of

COVID-19. They check what pupils know and what they need reminding of, before introducing new learning. Teachers work together as a strong, supportive team. Teachers are increasingly knowledgeable and skilled in teaching in the mixed year classes.

The new phonics scheme is well organised and structured. It begins as soon as children start in the Reception Year. Children quickly learn new sounds and have fun learning. They read books that match the sounds they know and enjoy listening to stories read to them. Children's enjoyment and love of reading is encouraged right from the start. Pupils who find reading more difficult, including pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), are well supported to catch up quickly.

Pupils develop as enthusiastic, confident and fluent readers to help them learn in all subjects. Teachers introduce them to a wide range of challenging texts and read to them every day. Teachers make sure that reading has an impact on enriching and expanding pupils' vocabulary. In 'Chilham Readers' sessions, pupils have three new words to learn and remember each day from the text they are reading.

Pupils with SEND are fully included in all aspects of school life. Staff know their needs well. Tailored support is provided to make sure that they have access to the same learning as others and achieve as well as they can. Pupils with more-complex needs have well-considered plans in place and receive appropriate support.

There is an unwavering determination, driven by the headteacher and shared by all staff, that pupils should thrive in their personal as well as their academic development. There are many opportunities for pupils to broaden their experiences and personal skills. Despite COVID-19 putting a halt on some trips out, there are many events that include families and the community, as well as a range of lunchtime clubs. Links with the other CARE Foundation Trust schools ensure that there are opportunities to explore diversity of cultures and cultural experiences. Pupils enjoy their responsibilities, such as being school council members and team captains, which they take seriously.

Staff feel extremely well looked after and supported by the headteacher regarding their workload, both professionally and personally. Those that replied to the staff survey are unanimous in their view that the school is well led and that they are proud to work there. Parents are overwhelmingly positive and supportive of the headteacher and staff. A parent commented, 'The teaching staff go above and beyond their normal duties to encourage a safe and happy working environment, under excellent leadership.'

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders, staff and governors are all fully trained in safeguarding and understand their responsibilities. Leaders ensure that the appropriate checks about the suitability of staff are carried out properly. Governors support leaders in asking the right questions about safeguarding procedures. Pupils' well-being and safety are priorities for everyone. Staff know pupils very well and can quickly identify signs that a child may be at risk of harm.

All staff are vigilant and know the procedures to follow if they have a concern, and any necessary action is taken swiftly. Pupils say they feel safe in school and their parents agree.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Pupils do not always achieve the depth of knowledge and understanding that they are capable of in some subjects. Leaders need to continue to embed the recent changes to the curriculum. This will ensure that pupils deepen their knowledge across the full range of subjects the school offers.

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	118665
Local authority	Kent
Inspection number	10211511
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	86
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Jennie Litten-Brown
Headteacher	Delia Cooper
Website	www.chilham.kent.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	28 February 2017, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- Chilham St Mary's is a voluntary controlled primary school with four classes. Children in Reception are taught in one class. There are two year groups in each of the other classes.
- The school is in a collaboration with nine other primary schools as part of the CARE Foundation Trust.
- The school's previous section 48 inspection of the school's distinctiveness and effectiveness as a Church of England school took place on 14 January 2016. The next section 48 inspection is expected before 2023.

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 held meetings with the headteacher, subject leaders, the special educational needs coordinator and governors. They also held telephone conversations with a

representative from the local authority and a representative from the Diocese of Canterbury.

- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: reading, mathematics and geography. For each deep dive, inspectors met with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, talked to some pupils and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Some pupils were heard reading to their teaching assistants. Pupils were observed in the playground and the inspectors spoke informally to different groups of pupils.
- To inspect safeguarding, an inspector met with the designated safeguarding lead and her deputy and looked at records of recruitment checks and safeguarding records, as well as the school's child protection policy.
- Inspectors considered the views of 31 parents who responded to the confidential parental questionnaire and 23 parents who provided free-text responses. They also took account of 12 responses to the confidential staff questionnaire.

Inspection team

Margaret Coussins, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Harry Ingham

Her Majesty's Inspector

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