

Inspection of a school judged Good for overall effectiveness before September 2024: St Nicholas Church of England Primary Academy

Fairfield Road, New Romney, Kent TN28 8BP

Inspection dates:

8 and 9 October 2024

Outcome

St Nicholas Church of England Primary Academy has taken effective action to maintain the standards identified at the previous inspection.

The headteacher of this school is Christopher Dale. This school is part of Aquila, The Diocese of Canterbury Academies Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer (CEO), Annie Wiles, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Susan Butterworth.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are exceptionally well cared for. Pupil well-being is at core of the school's work. Every day pupils are immersed in the school values of respect, friendship, trust and community. Pupils know that they matter here and have a strong sense of belonging. They feel safe, happy and heard. Staff build strong, good-humoured relationships with pupils. They know them well.

Staff expect pupils to work hard, and they do. These high expectations inspire pupils to develop the remaining school values of perseverance and ambition. Pupils attain well and are ready for the next stages of their education.

Standards of behaviour are high. Staff reinforce these consistently and clearly. Pupils know that they need to walk in the corridors, follow instructions, listen and be considerate of others. Right from the start in Reception, routines are clear. Pupils are polite, calm and focused. As a result, the school is an orderly environment.

Parents are, rightly, very positive about the 'family atmosphere' of the school. A parent summed up the views of many in saying, 'I have faith that my child is getting the best education possible.'

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

The school is highly ambitious for every pupil to succeed and do well. It has ensured that the needs of pupils are at the centre of curriculum development. The school has carefully crafted a curriculum that engages all pupils, is meaningful for them and supports their achievements. This curriculum starts in Reception and builds knowledge in clearly sequenced steps towards Year 6. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) have their needs carefully identified and supported. Pupils with SEND thrive and mostly achieve well.

Staff are well trained and have strong subject knowledge to deliver the curriculum. They use well-developed checks to quickly spot where pupils need additional help or are confused. Occasionally, however, the tasks they choose are not well adapted to the needs of all pupils. This can mean some pupils struggle to complete tasks successfully.

Right from the start in Reception, children are encouraged to build their vocabulary. Talk is developed as a priority. Staff routinely question children about the animals they are building with play dough or the letters they find hidden in porridge oats. They help them to answer using new words or sentences. Phonics is taught from the start. Staff are well trained and help pupils to master early reading skills quickly. Any pupils who start to fall behind are identified swiftly and given the help they need so they catch up. Pupils across the school read confidently and accurately.

Pupils learn to write alongside learning to read. Pupils, including pupils with SEND, are given a wide range of opportunities to compose writing for a range of purposes as they move through the school. Mostly pupils write clearly and legibly, and the few who still find forming letters difficult receive sensitive support.

Pupils' attainment in mathematics has been variable. The school has taken well-considered actions to strengthen the teaching of mathematics. This work is beginning to make a difference. Pupils have strong number skills. They know their tables. They work through calculations well. Increasingly, pupils are using this knowledge to select the best ways to solve the problems and challenges they are given.

The school's work to develop all pupils to become responsible, respectful and active citizens is exemplary. All pupils, including disadvantaged pupils, benefit from a huge range of opportunities to be active. The school has ensured that there is something in the extensive offer to appeal to everyone. The school takes full advantage of its coastal position to introduce pupils to a wide range of water sports such as paddleboarding. Pupils relish the many meaningful ways they can contribute to the wider life of the school. These include being worship leaders or coordinating the community food cupboard. Pupils perform these roles diligently and with great care.

Pupils like coming to school. They mostly attend well. The school helps pupils to understand the importance of regular attendance. Pupils are motivated by the rewards they can earn for good attendance, such as going to tea parties, class cinema trips and special attendance hooded sweatshirts.

The trust and governors work effectively with the school to ensure that there is a relentless determined drive towards ongoing improvement. This is helping to build successfully on the school's many strengths. Leaders manage staff workload carefully and make any necessary adjustments so that staff can focus on teaching.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Some of the actions the school has taken to strengthen pupils' learning in mathematics are relatively recent. This means that the school has not yet fully evaluated the effectiveness of these in raising pupils' attainment. The school should review and refine, if necessary, these changes as they embed across the school.
- Occasionally, teachers do not adapt tasks clearly enough to ensure all pupils can access them. When this happens, pupils are not always successfully learning the intended curriculum. The school should continue to support staff in adapting tasks so that all pupils successfully secure the intended knowledge.

Background

Until September 2024, on a graded (section 5) inspection we gave schools an overall effectiveness grade, in addition to the key and provision judgements. Overall effectiveness grades given before September 2024 will continue to be visible on school inspection reports and on Ofsted's website. From September 2024 graded inspections will not include an overall effectiveness grade. This school was, before September 2024, judged to be good for its overall effectiveness.

We have now inspected the school to determine whether it has taken effective action to maintain the standards identified at that previous inspection. 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's work has improved significantly or that it may not be as strong as it was at the last inspection, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection. A graded inspection 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 for overall effectiveness in May 2019.

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' is used to mean pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND); pupils who meet the [definition of children in need of help and protection](#); pupils receiving statutory local authority support from a social worker; and pupils who otherwise meet the criteria used for deciding the school's [pupil premium funding](#) (this includes pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years, looked after children (children in local authority care) and/or children who left care through adoption or another formal route).

School details

Unique reference number	142814
Local authority	Kent
Inspection number	10341802
Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	407
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Susan Butterworth
CEO of the trust	Annie Wiles
Headteacher	Christopher Dale
Website	www.st-nicholas-newromney.kent.sch.uk
Dates of previous inspection	22 and 23 May 2019, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school is part of Aquila, The Diocese of Canterbury Academies Trust.
- The school has a specially resourced provision for pupils with SEND for up to 14 pupils. All pupils have a diagnosis of autism and have an education, health and care plan.
- The school is a Church of England school in the Diocese of Canterbury. Its last section 48 inspection was in November 2023.
- The school does not currently use any alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

- Inspections are a point-in-time evaluation about the quality of a school's education provision.
- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.

- During the inspection, the inspector met with a range of school staff and held regular update meetings with leaders. The inspector also met with representatives of the trust, including the chair of the trust board and the CEO. A separate meeting was held with governors.
- The inspector visited a sample of lessons, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspector: reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.
- The inspector reviewed responses to Ofsted's parent, pupil and staff surveys and considered an email from a guardian.
- The inspector talked to staff to gather their views about the school, including about their workload and well-being. The inspector met with several groups of pupils, as well as speaking to pupils during lessons, playtimes and at lunchtime.

Inspection team

Deborah Perkins, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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