

Inspection of a good school: Richard Coates Church of England Primary School

Thornhill Road, Ponteland, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, Tyne and Wear NE20 9QB

Inspection dates: 11 and 12 July 2023

Outcome

Richard Coates Church of England Primary School continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils enjoy their time at this inclusive school. The Christian ethos of 'let your light shine' really does permeate all aspects of school life. Pupils particularly enjoy their playtimes when they can explore the large play spaces that they have helped to design. There is something to engage all interests, from the large sandpit and complex climbing frame to the relaxed arbour for chatting and reading.

Leaders want the best for all pupils. They set high expectations for pupils to be successful in their achievements. Pupils know this and respond well to such expectations.

Pupils' behaviour is good. They are particularly welcoming to visitors attending the school. Respectful behaviours and positive attitudes typify lessons. Pupils enjoy the opportunities they get to work with their peers. They are keen to talk about their learning.

Pupils feel safe in school. They say that bullying rarely happens. They know the different forms that it can take. They are confident that if there were an issue, there is a trusted adult to help them.

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

Leaders have designed a curriculum that matches the scope and expectations of the national curriculum. The essential knowledge for each subject is mapped out so that it builds step by step across the year. Pupils' learning experiences are further enhanced by a rich extra-curricular offer.

A new approach to the teaching of phonics is improving pupils' outcomes. More pupils acquire security in their phonic knowledge than was previously seen. Pupils in need of extra support are identified quickly so that they can keep up with their learning from the start. Pupils practise their reading with books that are well matched to their phonic knowledge. This is improving pupils' reading confidence and fluency.

Leaders encourage pupils to read regularly at home and at school. They do so. The recently relocated library now takes pride of place in the central atrium of the school. It is having a positive impact on pupils' enthusiasm for reading. The book exchange, established by parents and carers, is enhancing pupils' love of reading further.

Leaders have established a clear and strong curriculum intent. This is raising pupils' aspiration in subjects such as mathematics and science. Teachers welcome the way learning is designed to help them to teach key concepts. Occasionally, some teachers try to introduce more demanding work to some pupils too soon. When this happens, pupils do not produce work to the high standard that leaders expect. For example, sometimes, teachers move pupils on to investigations in science before they have made sure that pupils have a secure understanding of the necessary knowledge that they need. As a result, pupils struggle to explain their findings as well as they could.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are well supported in school. Leaders work well with external agencies to ensure that pupils' needs are identified accurately. Staff make appropriate curriculum adaptations for pupils with SEND to be successful. Pupils' individual support plans are exemplary. These identify precise targets for pupils and the best strategies for staff to use to help them.

In early years, children quickly settle into their routines. They are happy and well cared for. Leaders have developed a curriculum that builds the foundational knowledge that children need. In Reception Year, children are highly engaged in their learning. Activities and resources are expertly chosen to stimulate children's curiosity and interests. Adults are skilled at probing children's thinking and ironing out their misconceptions. However, there is some variability in the implementation of the curriculum across early years. In Nursery Year, activity choices are more variable in quality. Some adult interactions with children can lack the depth needed to extend children's learning effectively.

Leaders prioritise pupils' personal development. There is a wide range of after-school clubs on offer. Leaders do all they can to accommodate pupils' ideas and interests. Older pupils relish the opportunities they receive to support younger pupils. These include roles as playground leaders and digital ambassadors. Wider projects aim to increase pupils' awareness of the role that they can play as global citizens.

The trustees and governors know the school well. They use their skills and expertise to support improvements at the school. Staff and leaders value the support they receive from colleagues across the trust.

Most parents are overwhelmingly supportive of the school. They particularly welcome the introduction of the 'Friday Flyer', which has improved communication between home and school.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders complete detailed checks on anyone wishing to work at the school. They ensure that staff receive the training they need to keep pupils safe. Staff know the procedures they must follow when they have concerns about a pupil. Leaders make sure that any concerns are followed up straightaway. They make sure that pupils get the right support when they need it.

Pupils learn how to keep themselves safe at school and in the community. Internet safety is prioritised. Leaders engage the services of external agencies to reinforce important messages to pupils.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Occasionally, the activities that some teachers plan to deepen pupils' understanding are introduced before the prerequisite knowledge and skills needed for success have been secured. This means that some pupils do not extend their thinking or deepen their learning as well as they might. Leaders need to secure greater consistency in this aspect of curriculum implementation so that all pupils can deepen their understanding of subjects that they study.
- The implementation of the early years curriculum is variable, particularly in Nursery and in outdoor provision. This means that opportunities to extend and consolidate children's learning can be missed. Leaders need to iron out these inconsistencies so that all children are well prepared for their next steps in learning in all areas of their development.

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 predecessor school, Richard Coates Church of England School, to be good in July 2018.

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	145784
Local authority	Northumberland
Inspection number	10268481
Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	347
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Gerry Miller
Headteacher	Heather Cape
Website	www.richardcoatesceprimary.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- The school is part of Pele Trust, a multi-academy trust. The school converted to academy status in February 2019.
- Leaders completed the school's transition from being a middle school to becoming a primary school in 2019. In 2021, they oversaw the relocation of the school to a new building on the same site.
- Although the substantive headteacher will leave at the end of the term, leadership arrangements are secure. The deputy headteacher will continue in her role of acting headteacher for the forthcoming academic year.
- The school offers before- and after-school provision.
- The school does not use alternative provision for any of its pupils.

Information about this inspection

- This was the first routine inspection the school had received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. The inspector discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and has taken that into account in the evaluation of the school.

- Prior to the inspection, the inspector reviewed documents on the school's website, as well as published information about the school's performance and previous Ofsted inspections.
- During the inspection, the inspector met with the headteacher, deputy headteacher and other leaders.
- The inspector conducted deep dives in early reading, mathematics and science. For each deep dive, the inspector discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning, listened to some pupils reading and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- To check the effectiveness of safeguarding arrangements, the inspector met with the designated safeguarding lead and scrutinised relevant policies and procedures.
- The inspector met with three members of the local academy council, the director of trustees and the chief executive officer of the trust.
- Meetings were held with the school improvement adviser from the local authority and the school improvement adviser from the diocese.
- Inspectors considered the responses to the online questionnaire, Ofsted Parent View, including the free-text comments.
- Pupils' behaviour in lessons and around the school was observed, and behaviour logs and incidents were reviewed. The inspector met with pupils to discuss their understanding of behaviour, bullying and how to keep themselves safe.

Inspection team

Diane Buckle, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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