Inspection of a good school: The St Sebastian's Church of England Primary School, Great Gonerby

High Street, Great Gonerby, Grantham, Lincolnshire NG31 8LB

Inspection dates: 13 and 14 March 2023

Outcome

The St Sebastian's Church of England Primary School, Great Gonerby continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

This is a very welcoming and inclusive school. Parents and carers are very positive about their children's experiences. At the heart of the school are its values; 'Truthfulness, perseverance, aspiration, creativeness, courage, and friendship'. These underpin the recent changes to the school behaviour policy. Pupils enjoy receiving 'values points' for demonstrating these core values. As a consequence, pupils behave well. Pupils are well mannered and proud to attend the school. Pupils feel cared for, especially in regard of their mental well-being.

Leaders are ambitious for all pupils to achieve, especially those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Staff share leaders' ambitions. Parents and carers frequently use the term 'above and beyond' to describe how the school supports pupils and families. This promotes, as a parent stated, 'a real sense of community'.

Pupils are happy coming to school. The school is a welcoming environment which values everyone. Pupils understand equality and diversity. Leaders weave these concepts throughout the curriculum. As one pupil typically stated: 'Don't judge people on what they look like, or believe in, but how they behave.'

Pupils appreciate the variety of clubs and activities on offer such as Bible club, photography club and yoga. Visits to places of interest broaden pupils' horizons.

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

Leaders ensure pupils learn to read when they join the Reception Year. A rigorous approach to teaching phonics is in place. Staff provide the support pupils need should they fall behind. Pupils quickly catch up. Recent adaptations to ensuring pupils read fluently has strengthened phonics further. Beyond phonics, reading remains important.

There is a well-structured reading curriculum and consistent approach to teaching pupils. Leaders provide a wide range of books for pupils to access. These books support the wider curriculum, particularly to promote pupils' understanding of diversity. Pupils appreciate the incentives to read regularly, such as rewards for reading one-million words in a year. Pupils understand the significance of learning to read. One pupil reflected others' views by saying: 'It's the most important thing. It's so we can achieve everything!'

Leaders have designed an ambitious and well-sequenced curriculum. The curriculum identifies the key knowledge pupils need to know and remember. However, leaders have not fully developed systems to check pupils' knowledge in a few foundation subjects. Events such as 'science week' enrich the curriculum offer. There is a consistent approach to teaching the curriculum. For instance, in mathematics there is a four-step approach to lessons. This ensures pupils are clear about the expectations of them and strategies and methods to use. The renewed priority of mathematics this year has brought about significant improvements. In a few subjects, a few teachers lack an understanding of the content in previous units of work.

Children make a strong start in the early years foundation stage. Children settle in quickly to the routines of the class and the setting. The leader ensures the classroom is well organised to support children's learning. Thoughtfully designed activities generate curiosity in children. For instance, a floating and sinking activity kept one child engaged exploring why similar items floated better than others. Children collaborate well. Leaders make sure that the curriculum links learning over time. They identify key knowledge and break it down into small steps to ensure success. Adults know the children well because regular checks provide detailed information.

Support for pupils with SEND is strong. Regular checks identify pupils' needs. Clear individual plans provide staff with the information they need to support pupils in lessons. Pupils with SEND quickly become independent. Teachers provide access to the resources these pupils need to support their own learning.

Pupils behave well in and around school. Low-level disruption is minimal. The values-based approach to behaviour management is consistently applied. Pupils are clear of the expectations for them to behave well. Pupils are kind and thoughtful. They play well together on the playground and work well together in class. Playground leaders organise play equipment and activities. Pupils enjoy coming to school and attendance is high.

Leaders provide many opportunities for pupils to become responsible citizens. The school's curriculum ensures that pupils are well prepared for life beyond their primary school. Pupils learn to be tolerant. Pupils have a strong sense of moral purpose. The school council makes sure leaders are considerate of the environment. One parent said: 'The school teaches amazing values; kindness, perseverance, friendships and aspiration.' Pupils undertake responsibilities such as being worship leaders, prefects and corridor monitors.

Leaders are considerate of staff's well-being. They have built a strong sense of team. Governors understand their role. They carry this out diligently. As one governor said, 'We are here to trust, but verify'.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

The culture of safeguarding is strong. Regular training provides staff with the knowledge of how to keep pupils safe. Staff are vigilant to any signs of potential concern. Rigorous reporting systems supply leaders with the information they need to act quickly. Leaders ensure pupils and families receive the support they need. Leaders make appropriate checks on adults working in the school.

Pupils feel safe. They say bullying is rare. Should it happen, they know staff will deal with it. Pupils know how to keep themselves safe online. Should pupils have concerns they know there are adults they can go to.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Leaders have not fully developed systems to check pupils' knowledge in a few foundation subjects. As a result, a few pupils in these subjects have gaps in their knowledge. Leaders need to develop a consistent approach to check pupils' knowledge in all curriculum subjects and ensure that these checks do not place unnecessary burdens on staff or pupils.
- The curriculum is relatively new and has not been through a full cycle. In a few subjects, some staff lack an understanding of the knowledge in previous units of work. As a consequence, they do not address gaps in pupils' knowledge. Leaders should ensure teachers are aware of the prior learning and able to provide the knowledge pupils need should it be lacking.

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	120601
Local authority	Lincolnshire
Inspection number	10227224
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	167
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Steph Kirton
Executive headteacher	Elaine Bedford
Website	www.st-sebastians.lincs.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	31 January 2017, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school is part of the Grantham Villages' Church of England Primary Schools Federation.
- The school does not make use of any alternative providers.

Information about this inspection

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. The inspector discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and has taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- The inspector held meetings with the executive headteacher, the head of school and the special educational needs and disabilities coordinator.
- The inspector carried out deep dives in three subjects: reading, mathematics and design and technology. To do this, he met with curriculum leaders, visited lessons, looked at pupils' work, listened to pupils read and met with teachers and pupils. The inspector also looked at curriculum documentation for physical education.
- The inspector met with four members of the local governing body, including the chair.

- The inspector met with a local authority representative.
- The inspector took account of the responses to the Ofsted Parent View survey, and Ofsted's pupil and staff surveys. The inspector spoke informally to parents outside the school.
- Records of attendance, behaviour and safeguarding were scrutinised. This included the school's single central record. The inspector also conducted meetings with leaders to discuss the safeguarding of pupils.
- The inspector considered pupils' behaviour at various times of day, including in lessons, around the school site and at lunchtime.

Inspection team

Mark Anderson, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector

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