

Inspection of St Christopher’s Church of England School, Cowley

Temple Road, Cowley, Oxford, Oxfordshire OX4 2HB

Inspection dates: 11 to 12 June 2024

Overall effectiveness	Good
The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Outstanding
Leadership and management	Good
Early years provision	Good
Previous inspection grade	Requires improvement

The head of school is James Veness and the executive headteacher is Katie Screatton. This school is part of Oxford Diocesan Schools Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer, Anne Dellar, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Kathy Winrow.

What is it like to attend this school?

A strong inclusive ethos is at the heart of this school. It is committed to serving and welcoming all pupils and their families. The care given to pupils by staff show the school's values of nurture, love, belonging, respect and courage in action. Pupils embrace these values to help them make the right choices, meeting the staff's high expectations and behaving well.

The school is ambitious for pupils' achievements, including for those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) and pupils who speak English as an additional language. The school has a strong understanding of individual pupils' needs. Staff work relentlessly to make every day successful for every pupil. As a result, pupils achieve well.

Pupils are polite, well-mannered and respectful. At social times, pupils eat and play sensibly with their friends. Pupil leadership opportunities, such as those of school councillors and eco leaders, enable them to have a genuine role in decision-making. The school provides a rich set of experiences for pupils. These include curriculum visits that enhance learning in history and science. Pupils also raise money each year for the Year 6 residential trip, as a result the cost is lowered, and far more pupils attend.

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

The school recognises that pupils did not achieve as well as they should have by the end of key stage 2 in reading and mathematics. Leaders have taken decisive and effective action to address this. The school has now embedded a broad and ambitious curriculum. They have ordered knowledge sensibly and worked out the most important knowledge that pupils, including pupils with SEND, need to know.

Leaders have prioritised improving staff subject knowledge through precisely targeted training. Within lessons, staff check and address pupils' mistakes or misunderstandings. In subjects such as reading and mathematics, staff effectively check what pupils can remember. This leads to pupils knowing more in these subjects. However, in a few subjects, assessment is not always used well enough to check pupils' knowledge. Consequently, in these subjects there are some gaps in what pupils can remember.

Pupils love reading and this is fostered expertly throughout the school. Staff read to pupils each day and recommend books to pupils and each other to create a culture of reading in the school. In Reception, children concentrate well because teachers keep them interested and enthused, particularly in phonics. Children learn phonics quickly, and staff identify gaps in children's understanding by checking how well they are starting to read. Skilled staff provide high-quality support for those who need to catch up. Books closely match the sounds that pupils need to practise, and support is regularly reviewed to ensure that it is impactful. As a result, pupils quickly become fluent readers as they move through the year groups.

The school's provision for pupils with SEND is strong. Regular checking ensures that support and interventions meet pupils' individual needs. Pupils recognise their emotions and are given strategies to help manage their behaviour. As a result, pupils with SEND feel included and achieve well.

The school has high expectations of pupils' attendance, and it is everyone's responsibility. Rigorous, shared systems have driven strong improvements in pupil attendance since 2022. Should families find supporting their children to attend regularly difficult, leaders are extremely diligent in helping to find a solution. Pupils' personal development is exceptional. The school provides extremely strong welfare and pastoral support for both children and their families, steered by the school's values. The school's extensive nurture provision identifies and addresses the social and emotional needs of each child and their families effectively. For example, the school runs classes for families who want to develop their confidence with speaking English. This helps parents grow in confidence and be able to better support their children's learning. Pupils talk with a deep understanding about relationships, growing up and what it means to be respectful to themselves and others.

Leaders are highly ambitious for all pupils, staff and the community that they serve. A well-structured programme of training supports strong teaching. The school prioritises staff workload and well-being. Staff value the collaborative working within the trust schools, which supports their teaching. The trust and local governing board fulfil their statutory duties with expertise, ensuring a strong partnership across the trust.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In some subjects, teachers do not always use assessment well enough. Where this is the case, some pupils do not remember what they have learned before in sufficient detail. The school must ensure that teachers in all subjects assess what pupils know equally effectively.

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 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	140556
Local authority	Oxfordshire
Inspection number	10321985
Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	5 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	370
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Kathy Winrow
CEO of trust	Anne Dellar
Executive Headteacher	Katie Screatton
Head of school	James Veness
Website	www.st-christophers-pri.oxon.sch.uk
Dates of previous inspection	15 and 16 March 2022, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- This is an average-sized primary school.
- This school is a part of the Oxford Diocesan Schools Trust.
- The school does not currently use any alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Inspections are a point-in-time judgement about the quality of a school's education provision.

- This was the second routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. The inspectors discussed any lasting impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in this evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors met with senior leaders, staff and pupils. The lead inspector also met with the representatives of the local governing board and the chair of trustees. Inspectors also met with the trust's chief executive officer.
- The inspection team carried out deep dives in these subjects: reading, mathematics, history, art and computing. They discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, teachers and pupils. Inspectors also visited lessons and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors considered the responses to the Ofsted Parent View questionnaire, including the free-text comments. They also took account of the responses to the confidential staff survey and gathered the views of both staff and pupils throughout the inspection.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, inspectors: 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.
- Inspectors reviewed and scrutinised a range of the school's documentation, including leaders' plans for improving the school, minutes of local governing board meetings and records of attendance and behaviour incidents.

Inspection team

Neil Pilsworth, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Sarah O'Donnell	Ofsted Inspector
Andrew Foster	Ofsted Inspector

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