

Inspection of St Swithun's Church of England Primary Academy

Grove Street, Retford, Nottinghamshire DN22 6LD

Inspection dates: 13 and 14 September 2022

Overall effectiveness	Requires improvement
The quality of education	Requires improvement
Behaviour and attitudes	Requires improvement
Personal development	Requires improvement
Leadership and management	Requires improvement
Early years provision	Requires improvement
Previous inspection grade	Not previously inspected under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

What is it like to attend this school?

During recent times, expectations have been raised for the standard of pupils' behaviour and the quality of learning. Pupils say that if bullying happens, teachers will deal with it.

The COVID-19 pandemic is affecting school life, in particular the wider opportunities to promote pupils' personal development. However, pupils are now benefiting greatly from clubs such as Worship Leaders, School Council and Young Voices. They enjoy the responsibilities these clubs offer.

Pupils are happy at school. They appreciate the support from their teachers. One said, 'They always greet you with a smile in the morning and make you feel good.' Pupils feel they can share their worries and concerns. The 'I need to talk' box ensures they can share these worries confidentially if necessary. Although they are tolerant of each other, some pupils are less aware of the importance of difference in broader society.

Pupils get off to a strong start in early reading and in phonics. Staff encourage a love of books and reading throughout the school.

Leaders are honest about the work needed to improve the school. Trust leaders recognise that improvement work now needs to move at pace following a sustained period of instability in staffing and leadership.

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

Leaders have designed a curriculum which is progressive and sequenced. However, this is at an earlier stage of consistent implementation in some subjects compared to others. Subject leaders know the content of their curriculum. These leaders have had limited time and training to introduce refinements to the subject or phase of the curriculum. For example, the curriculum lacks precision and detail to ensure a strong transition for children between the early years foundation stage (EYFS) and key stage 1.

Children make a good start in the EYFS. Leaders and staff work with parents to get to know their children well. Parents say their children enjoy coming to school. Staff are well trained and respond quickly to children's needs. Adults rightly focus on supporting children to be able to communicate effectively. Suitably organised activities ensure children learn well on their own and when working with others. Children's behaviour is good. Nevertheless, the curriculum lacks some precision in certain areas of learning; this has started to be addressed by leaders.

Learning to read is a priority. Leaders have ensured all staff have the necessary training and expertise to teach pupils to read. Pupils learn to read quickly. Books are well matched to pupils' knowledge of sounds. Teachers make reading fun and bring the content of books to life. The range of new and exciting books, which have

recently been bought by leaders, motivates pupils to read. Pupils respond positively to the reading challenge. Pupils understand the importance of learning to read.

Leaders accurately identify pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND); however, they are not always providing the specific support that they need. For example, the targets set for pupils with SEND are too general and lack precision. This is limiting the achievement of this group of pupils.

Pupils' attitudes to learning are typically positive. In some lessons, however, when learning is not well sequenced or delivered, pupils behave less well. At unstructured times, like playtimes, pupils are not as considerate of each other's needs as they could be. Pupils say that they would like more resources to play with and better organisation and structure during these times.

Parents recognise that the school has undergone a period of change following the three national lockdowns. Some concern remains about bullying. Leaders are working with parents and carers to provide further reassurance that this is being addressed.

Pupils have a broad range of opportunities to hold responsibilities as part of their personal development. There is an active eco and school council. Worship leaders spoke enthusiastically about how this group helps them to develop. They understand the importance of worship and develop leadership skills. One said: 'We learned how to lead, present and end worship. This really built my confidence.'

Pupils learn about respect, and they are respectful of each other. The personal, social and health education (PSHE) curriculum provides guidance about how to be responsible citizens. Leaders are passionate about this element of the curriculum. They know of its importance for their community. However, respect and tolerance of world faiths other than Christianity are less well developed. Pupils learn about the changes that take place in their bodies as they grow older in a timely manner.

COVID-19 is a factor that impacts on pupils' attendance. Leaders have recently put in place systems to address this. However, the full impact is yet to be seen.

A new governing board has recently been appointed by the multi-academy trust (MAT). It is providing suitable levels of challenge and support to the new leadership team.

The arrival of the new leadership team has provided some impetus in bringing about improvement. Support from the MAT has had a positive impact on raising expectations.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders prioritise pupil safety. There is a positive culture of safeguarding. Leaders have prioritised this aspect of the school's work. Staff commented that there is regular training. Records show that staff recognise concerns and ensure leaders have the information to act appropriately. Pupils get the support when needed. Outside agencies' support is effective and well coordinated. Leaders make appropriate checks on adults prior to their appointment as members of staff.

Pupils learn how to keep themselves safe online and in the community. Although bullying is still a concern for some parents, pupils say they feel safe.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Staff have not yet received the full range of curriculum training. Although leaders have mapped out the curriculum, they have not adapted it fully to meet the needs of pupils, including in the early years. Staff do not have a firm grasp of how the curriculum content is sequenced in all subjects from the EYFS to Year 6. This is limiting the achievement of pupils. Leaders should ensure that the curriculum sets out the precise knowledge and skills pupils should acquire, and when, and that this is known and understood by all staff.
- Some subject leaders have only had a limited time to carry out checks on the impact of the new curriculum. As a result, they have not refined the curriculum and ensured that pupils can know and remember more over time. Senior leaders should ensure that subject leaders develop the necessary skills to have a secure overview of the impact of the curriculum on pupils' learning and their ability to retain and recall what they have been taught.
- The early identification of pupils with SEND and the tracking of their progress are too slow. The targets set for pupils with SEND are too general and lack precision. As a result, some pupils with SEND do not achieve as highly as they should. Leaders should ensure that pupils with SEND rapidly receive high-quality support so they can access the full curriculum.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is not as well developed as it could be. Pupils do not have a good understanding of fundamental British values. This means that they do not develop their understanding of contemporary society as well as they could. Leaders should ensure that pupils gain a deeper understanding of other faiths and cultures.
- Too many pupils do not attend school regularly enough. Although systems are in place to challenge and address low attendance, they are not applied rigorously enough. As a consequence, some pupils are missing large quantities of their learning, which impacts on their achievement. Leaders should ensure persistent

absence is fully addressed so that all pupils make the most of the opportunities provided by the school.

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	145447
Local authority	Nottinghamshire County Council
Inspection number	10240405
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	119
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Phillip Blinston
Headteacher	Paul Charly
Website	www.st-swithuns.notts.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- This was the school's first inspection since joining the Diocese of Southwell and Nottingham Multi-Academy Trust in September 2017. When the predecessor school, St. Swithun's CofE Primary School, was last inspected by Ofsted, it was judged to be good overall.
- Since the school joined the trust, there have been significant changes in staffing, leadership and governance.
- The headteacher took up post in September 2022.
- The school uses no alternative providers.

Information about this inspection

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

- 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 senior leaders, including the special educational needs and disabilities coordinator and representatives from the trust.
- Deep dives were conducted in the following subjects: early reading, mathematics, geography and science. For each deep dive, inspectors met with subject leaders, looked at curriculum plans, visited a sample of lessons, spoke with teachers and talked to some pupils about their learning. Aspects of the school's PSHE programme were also sampled.
- Information on attendance, behaviour logs and safeguarding records were scrutinised. This included the school's single central record. Inspectors also conducted meetings with leaders to discuss the safeguarding of pupils.
- Inspectors considered pupils' behaviour at various times of day, including in lessons, around the school site and at lunchtime. The school's records on behaviour were also considered.
- The views of staff were considered through the Ofsted survey. View of parents were sought during the inspection. Very few responses were received to the Ofsted parent survey.

Inspection team

Mark Anderson, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Rebecca Jackson

Ofsted Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
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