

Inspection of St Nicholas Church of England Primary School, Tillingham

The Street, Tillingham, Southminster, Essex CM0 7TJ

Inspection dates: 4 to 5 June 2024

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

The headteacher of this school is Nicola Emrich. This school is part of The Diocese of Chelmsford Vine 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, Emma Wigmore, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Caroline Haynes.

What is it like to attend this school?

This is a friendly and purposeful school. Pupils are courteous and polite. They play together in their free time in a calm and happy way. They treat each other and adults nicely. Pupils across the school demonstrate positive attitudes. Older pupils, in particular, are grateful for the changes the school has made this year to significantly reduce poor behaviour and enhance their education. Lessons proceed free from disruption and pupils work well.

Bullying has happened in the past but is now rare. Pupils are confident that if it did happen, adults would deal with it well. They have adults in the school they can talk to if they are worried about something.

Leaders, the trust and staff share high expectations. This is evident in all aspects of the school. As a result, pupils learn well across the different subjects they study. They understand the school's values, such as to respect one another. They learn about different religions and cultures and know to treat those who are different from themselves well.

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

In 2023, pupils did not achieve as well as they should have. This was because there were lots of staff changes and an inconsistent approach to teaching. Standards of behaviour were not good enough. The school and trust have taken direct and effective action to address this. Pupils now learn well.

The school has transformed behaviour. Pupils listen and work well in lessons. They respond appropriately to adults' guidance. They treat each other with respect. This has come about because the school now insists on high standards of behaviour from everyone.

Some pupils' special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) have, in the past, hindered their ability to behave appropriately. The school has dealt with this well. They have identified what pupils' specific needs are and put support in place which helps them. These pupils listen and learn well alongside their peers.

The school has overhauled the curriculum. They have rapidly and highly effectively brought in a new approach to teaching phonics. They have trained staff to use this approach well. They make sure the books pupils read match the sounds they know. They have made sure pupils who fell behind in the past have caught up, or are doing so rapidly now. As a result, pupils are learning to read fluently and well.

Similarly, the school has changed the way in which mathematics is taught. Teachers have been trained to use the existing curriculum plans well. They do so. As a result, pupils' understanding of mathematics is now much better than 2023 outcomes indicated.

Other aspects of the curriculum are equally reformed. Across all subjects, clear documentation sets out what teachers should teach and when. Teachers use this information effectively to teach pupils what they need to know. Pupils are now learning what they should in different subjects. In subjects other than English and mathematics, these approaches to the curriculum are quite new. Pupils are now learning what the school intends them to. However, at this stage, there has not been time for pupils to learn a deep body of knowledge in these subjects.

The school teaches children in the early years well. The school has successfully brought in a new curriculum here too. Adults have had time to use this to good effect to ensure children learn what they need to. Through a mixture of direct teaching, independent play and guided activities, children develop the skills and knowledge they need to be ready for Year 1.

The school pays careful attention to pupils' personal development. There is a wide range of extra-curricular activity for pupils to participate in, including sports clubs and competitions, musical activities, and trips, such as to the Christmas pantomime. The school monitors who attends which activities. They encourage and enable pupils with SEND, and pupils who are disadvantaged, to attend these activities. As a result, attendance from these groups of pupils is high.

Attendance was, in the past, low. Leaders look in detail at the reasons for pupils' absences on a weekly basis. They take action to improve the attendance of pupils when it is not as high as it should be. This approach is driving up attendance and reducing the level of persistent absenteeism.

Leadership is a notable strength. The trust improvement board closely monitors and challenges school and trust leaders on their work. They have an in-depth understanding of the school's strengths and ongoing developments. Together, school leaders, trust leaders and the trust improvement board have brought about rapid and sustained improvement. This is having a clear, positive, impact on pupils' education and well-being.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In subjects other than English and mathematics, curriculum plans are new. As a result, pupils have not learned a detailed body of knowledge of these subjects

over time. The school needs to make sure these curriculums have the positive impact they intend over time.

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	147413
Local authority	Essex
Inspection number	10323793
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	121
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Caroline Haynes
CEO of the trust	Emma Wigmore
Headteacher	Nicola Emrich
Website	www.st-nicholas-pri.essex.sch.uk
Date(s) of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- The school has a religious character: Church of England.
- The school is part of The Diocese of Chelmsford Vine Schools Trust.
- The most recent section 48 inspection took place on 24 April 2024. Its next section 48 inspection will be within eight school years.
- The school does not use any alternative providers.
- St Nicholas Church of England Primary School, Tillingham, converted to become an academy in December 2019. When its predecessor school, St Nicholas Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School, was last inspected by Ofsted, it was judged to be good overall.

Information about this inspection

The inspector(s) 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 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.
- Inspectors spoke with senior leaders of the school and trust, including the headteacher and chief executive officer, as well as members of the trust improvement board. Inspectors spoke with a representative from the Diocese of Chelmsford.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics, geography and art. For each deep dive, inspectors held discussions about the curriculum, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- 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 spoke with parents, pupils and staff and took account of the views parents expressed in their responses to Ofsted's survey, Ofsted Parent View.

Inspection team

Andrew Hemmings, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Laura Hewer	Ofsted Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
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