

Inspection of a school judged outstanding for overall effectiveness before September 2024: Reculver Church of England Primary School

Hillborough, Herne Bay, Kent CT6 6TA

Inspection dates:

19 and 20 November 2024

Outcome

Reculver Church of England Primary School has taken effective action to maintain the standards identified at the previous inspection.

The headteacher of this school is Stella Collins. This school is part of Aquila Multi-Academy Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer (CEO), Annie Wiles, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Sue Butterworth.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), thrive at this inclusive school. Teachers are highly ambitious for all pupils. Staff ensure that pupils learn the important skills and knowledge they need. Pupils have a rich understanding of the content they learn. They learn the breadth of the national curriculum and use subject-specific vocabulary accurately. As a result, they are well prepared for their next steps.

Pupils enjoy school. They are happy and safe. Pupils develop positive relationships with staff and each other. They know that staff will help them with any concerns they have. Teachers have high expectations of pupils' behaviour. Pupils work with determination to meet them. They show this through their excellent conduct and courteous manners. The school is calm and purposeful throughout.

The school offers high-quality pastoral support through its skilled well-being team members. They identify quickly pupils who may require additional support. They offer a range of therapeutic input and personalised mentoring for pupils. Well-trained staff also provide interventions, such as forest school, to improve pupils' resilience. Staff know the pupils well and support them throughout the school day effectively. Pupils' behaviour and attendance improve significantly as a result of this work.

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

The school has designed an ambitious curriculum that starts in early years. It has carefully identified the key skills and content that pupils need and the order in which to learn it. Teachers ensure that they check pupils' prior learning before introducing new content. This helps pupils to deepen their understanding over time. Teachers have very secure subject knowledge. Staff ensure that all interactions with children are of a high quality. As a result, pupils learn new content and apply it consistently well.

Pupils learn the key foundational knowledge they need. This begins in early years, where pupils learn phonics from the start. Expert staff deliver the phonics scheme skilfully. Pupils learn the sounds and letters they need. As a result, they become fluent readers. The books that pupils read are well matched to the sounds and letters they know. This helps them to become independent and confident readers. Staff identify pupils who fall behind swiftly and ensure they receive appropriate help to catch up quickly.

Pupils write thoughtfully and with purpose. They use rich and varied language to express themselves clearly in their writing. Younger pupils learn to write early in their school lives. They have well-developed skills in spelling, punctuation and handwriting. Due to the impact of COVID-19, and historic teaching, this is less consistent for older pupils. As a result, a small number of pupils' work shows errors in their writing. Pupils have strong mathematical knowledge. They recall key number facts with fluency and apply them accurately to solve problems.

The school identifies the needs of pupils clearly and uses this to adapt its teaching to remove barriers to learning. Disadvantaged pupils achieve well as a result. Pupils in the specially resourced provision for pupils with SEND learn a carefully adapted curriculum. This includes wider curriculum subjects, where carefully selected activities and support means all pupils learn the breadth of the curriculum. For example, in Spanish, pupils with SEND use the same rich vocabulary as their classmates.

Pupils are well prepared for life in modern Britain. They learn about a range of religions and beliefs. Pupils learn about historical figures from a range of cultures. The texts in the school's thoughtfully considered 'reading spine' enhance pupils' understanding of the wider world. Pupils understand the importance of respect and acceptance. They celebrate difference and diversity in the school.

Pupils learn important leadership skills through varied roles, including the school council. Pupils are proud of these roles. They also take on class responsibilities and carry them out diligently.

Pupils have exceptional attitudes to learning. They listen intently and work hard in lessons. Teachers know the pupils who require additional help to behave well. Staff ensure these pupils have the skills and strategies they need. Pupils and their families know the importance of frequent attendance. Staff monitor attendance carefully and identify quickly pupils who require additional support. These strategies are effective. As a result, pupils attend frequently. This is continuing to improve over time.

The school works closely with the dedicated staff team. It ensures that staff have the support and training they need to work in the best interests of children. Leaders are reflective and seek appropriate advice from the trust to maintain and refine the curriculum effectively. Governors and trustees are knowledgeable and share the same high ambitions as leaders. They offer challenge and support in equal measure.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The impact of COVID-19 and the historical teaching of writing mean some older pupils are not consistent in their use of important elements of writing, including spelling, punctuation and handwriting. Consequently, a small number of pupils' writing can contain errors in these areas. The school needs to ensure that it continues to embed the new approaches to writing for all pupils and improve the important skills of transcription for these pupils.

Background

Until September 2024, on a graded (section 5) inspection we gave schools an overall effectiveness grade, in addition to the key and provision judgements. Overall effectiveness grades given before September 2024 will continue to be visible on school inspection reports and on Ofsted's website. From September 2024 graded inspections will not include an overall effectiveness grade. This school was, before September 2024, judged to be outstanding for its overall effectiveness.

We have now inspected the school to determine whether it has taken effective action to maintain the standards identified at that previous inspection. 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's work has improved significantly or that it may not be as strong as it was at the last inspection, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection. A graded inspection 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 school to be outstanding for overall effectiveness 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' 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	141216
Local authority	Kent
Inspection number	10296406
Type of school	Primary
School category	Sponsored academy
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	452
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Sue Butterworth
CEO of the trust	Annie Wiles
Headteacher	Stella Collins
Website	www.reculver.kent.sch.uk
Dates of previous inspection	3 and 4 July 2018, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school's headteacher and senior leadership team have changed since the last inspection.
- The school currently uses no alternative provision.
- The school manages breakfast clubs and after-school clubs for pupils.
- The school manages a specially resourced provision for pupils with visual impairment and cognition and learning difficulties. There are a total of five pupils who are taught in mainstream classes.
- Reculver Church of England Primary School is a Church of England voluntary-controlled school. The school's most recent section 48 Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist schools took place in January 2020. The school's next section 48 inspection will take place within eight years.

Information about this inspection

- Inspections are a point-in-time evaluation about the quality of a school's education provision.
- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. The inspector discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and has taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- During the inspection, the inspector met with the headteacher and other leaders. They also met members of the governing body. The inspector met with the CEO of the trust and held a phone conversation with a trust board member. They also held a phone conversation with a representative of the local diocese.
- The inspector focused inspection activity on groups of subjects. For each group of subjects, the inspector visited a sample of lessons, spoke with pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspector: 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.
- Throughout the inspection, the inspector met with groups of staff. They also considered the opinions expressed through the staff survey.
- The inspector met some parents at the start of the school day and took into account the views expressed through Ofsted Parent View.

Inspection team

Gavin Thomas, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

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