

Inspection of The Bishop's Church of England Primary Academy

Canterbury Way, Thetford, Norfolk IP24 1EB

Inspection dates:	4 and 5 March 2025
The quality of education	Requires improvement
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Good
Early years provision	Good
Previous inspection grade	Requires improvement

The headteacher of this school is Lorraine Ratcliffe. This school is part of The Diocese of Norwich Education and Academies 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), Oliver Burwood, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Beverly Tilman.

What is it like to attend this school?

Every day at this school starts with making sure the pupils are ready to learn. Staff are welcoming, and there is plenty of toast on offer. Pupils are enthusiastic to come to school and learn. There is strong support for families to help pupils be in school and on time.

During playtimes, there is plenty for pupils to do and explore. For example, they build dens together and use tyres and barrels as part of their imaginative play. Older pupils organise play, such as parachute games, for the youngest. There are many opportunities to investigate the outdoors in wooded areas and practise climbing and balancing on the play equipment.

Right from the start, the school clearly teaches pupils the expectations for behaviour. This means the school is calm. Pupils can concentrate on their work and learn.

In the past, pupils have not achieved as well as they should have by the end of Year 6. Current pupils are achieving better, but there is still work to do to ensure more pupils have the knowledge and skills they need to be successful at secondary school.

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

Since the previous inspection, the school has put in place effective systems to evaluate all aspects of its work. Leaders are ambitious for pupils. They are well on the way with the rapid improvements needed to improve the school's provision. The pace of this change has been rapid. Staff feel well supported. Despite the number of changes made, they are committed to the school and understand why changes are in place.

Reading is taught using a highly consistent approach. Regular checks and adjustments to teaching groups mean that pupils are taught phonics precisely and effectively. Daily, brief additional catch-up sessions for those who have gaps in phonics knowledge, help them learn to read. Many pupils join the school requiring support to develop their speaking and listening skills. The school ensures that focused teaching enables these pupils to begin to catch up by the end of Year 1.

The school has prioritised attendance, consistent behaviour expectations and teaching core skills, such as reading and mathematics. The teaching of writing has improved but is not consistently effective. Some pupils do not have routine opportunities to practise and apply their writing skills. Many pupils do not have the skills needed to have fluent handwriting that enables them to write quickly.

In reading and mathematics, teachers use their checks on pupils' learning well to identify and address any gaps in pupils' learning. However, the gaps in pupils' learning in other subjects remain. Due to previous missed learning, teachers have to reteach some basic content. This slows pupils' progress through the curriculum. They do not have a secure understanding of the knowledge appropriate for their age in these subjects.

Children in the early years learn to speak clearly and use wider vocabulary through playing alongside adults who model this. The early years environment provides lots of opportunities for children to practise key physical skills that help their writing.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) have their needs identified accurately. Staff work towards clear targets for these pupils. However, as with their classmates, pupils with SEND are not supported as well as they should be to develop their writing and knowledge in subjects other than reading and mathematics. Children in the early years and pupils in Year 1 with speech and language difficulties are supported well to develop their communication skills in the Cherry Blossom class. This has led to the successful reintegration of many pupils to their main classes in school.

Pupils are usually well behaved and sensible. When there are incidents of poor behaviour, which is rare, staff deal with these quickly and sensitively. Pupils are proud of the many responsibilities they have, such as being on the school council or becoming a play leader. Attendance has risen from being very low because of the school's tenacious support for families.

Pupils learn about current global issues to help them understand their part in the wider world. The school has adapted the curriculum to make the most of the local area, with lots of trips to further engage pupils in learning.

School leaders, governors and the trust are highly ambitious for what pupils can achieve. They are realistic that changes take time. Subject leaders are knowledgeable about their subjects. The school works closely with the multi-academy trust to bring in expertise to support school improvement effectively.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Pupils' writing is not as strong as their skills in reading and mathematics. This is because the way they are taught does not enable them to practise writing at length or develop the transcription skills needed for fluent writing. The school needs to ensure that writing is taught effectively and supports pupils to develop their writing knowledge and skills.
- Previous weaknesses in teaching mean that many pupils have large gaps in what they should have learned when they were younger in foundation subjects. Teachers are working to fill these gaps, but pupils are not achieving as well as they should in these subjects. The school needs to ensure that the quality of teaching of all subjects is strong so pupils can learn more and achieve well across the full range of subjects.

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	142633
Local authority	Norfolk
Inspection number	10345422
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	383
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair	Beverly Tilman
CEO of the trust	Oliver Burwood
Headteacher	Lorraine Ratcliffe
Website	www.bishop.norfolk.sch.uk
Dates of previous inspection	13 and 14 September 2022, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school does not use any alternative provision.
- This is a Church of England school in the Diocese of Norwich. The last inspection of its religious character, under section 48 of the Education Act 2005, was in April 2024.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005. During a graded inspection, we grade the school for each of our key judgements (quality of education; behaviour and attitudes; personal development; and leadership and management) and for any relevant provision judgement (early years and/or sixth form provision). Schools receiving a graded inspection from September 2024 will not be given an overall effectiveness grade.

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

- Inspectors discussed any continued impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors spoke to the headteacher and other leaders. They met the CEO of the trust, the deputy CEO, the chair of governors and a member of the board of trustees.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics, history and science. 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.
- Inspectors also discussed the curriculum in some other subjects and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the 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.

Inspection team

Tessa Holledge, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Jules Stops	Ofsted Inspector
Sally Garrett	Ofsted Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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