

Inspection of Tonwell St Mary's Church of England Primary School

Ware Road, Tonwell, Ware, Hertfordshire SG12 0HN

Inspection dates: 13 and 14 September 2022

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	Requires improvement

What is it like to attend this school?

St Mary's is a warm, friendly and calm place for pupils to learn. Pupils enjoy attending their very small school where they know each other well. All pupils play together happily at lunch- and breaktimes. They feel safe because adults are kind and supportive of them.

Adults have high expectations of pupils' achievement. Pupils want to do their best. They say that adults help them with their work. Pupils are more confident in their learning and are beginning to achieve well in a range of subjects. They take pride in their achievements.

Pupils are respectful of others. They listen to what everyone has to say. Pupils say that there is very little bullying in their school. If there is, they know that the adults in school will help resolve any problems.

Pupils behave well in lessons and in the playground. They welcome opportunities to grow in independence and maturity. For example, they feel trusted to handle and use tools on their own in forest school.

Pupils learn about a range of different religions. They remember the different places of worship they have visited. These visits help pupils to understand and respect the differences in the world.

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

Leaders have worked well to develop ambitious curriculum plans. Most of these plans contain the important knowledge that pupils must learn and state when they must learn it. A few plans are not developed sufficiently well. Teachers are then not clear about which important knowledge pupils need to learn and remember. As a result, in a small number of subjects, pupils do not always recall their learning well.

Teachers usually introduce new knowledge at the right time. This helps pupils build on their prior learning. Where curriculum plans are less well developed, lessons contain too much information, or pupils spend time on things not related to the important learning. Pupils do not then learn the intended curriculum.

Teachers receive regular training to teach the curriculum. Some plans provide resources and information to help teachers plan their lessons. Teachers appreciate this as it helps with their workload. Teachers use assessment to record what pupils know and can do. However, in a few subjects, teachers do not use this information to adapt future teaching. Pupils then develop gaps in their learning.

Adults support pupils well in their learning. Pupils are becoming more confident in their learning. Adults have higher expectations of what pupils can achieve without adult support. Pupils concentrate well on their learning and behave well.

Leaders ensure that pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are identified early. Leaders ensure that support is effective. They take advice from other experts when necessary. Pupils are well supported in their learning and make progress against their individual targets. Pupils with SEND access the full curriculum alongside their friends.

Teachers manage any inappropriate behaviour in line with the behaviour policy. Pupils rarely interrupt the learning of other pupils. Pupils' books show that they remember and make progress in their learning.

Children in early years learn very well. Adults have high expectations of what children can achieve. Children respond to these expectations and are independent, curious learners. The curriculum in early years is planned effectively. Pupils enter key stage 1 well prepared for the next stage of their learning. The learning environment allows pupils to practise learning throughout the day.

Staff are trained effectively to teach the early reading curriculum. Pupils engage well in these lessons, where there are familiar routines and expectations. Pupils apply what they learn to their independent reading. Books are well matched to the sounds that pupils know. As a result, pupils learn to read fluently and with understanding. Staff check that pupils are remembering their learning. They help pupils to catch up in reading and mathematics with revision and extra teaching if needed. In other curriculum areas, teachers are beginning to make these checks so that children achieve well across the curriculum.

Leaders and governors promote pupils' personal development well. The close working with another local school provides opportunities to meet others. Pupils can now play in sports teams, develop socially and join large events, such as the recent Queen's Platinum Jubilee celebrations. Pupils talk with pride of singing in public and picnicking with new friends. Pupils enjoy a range of visits and visitors that help them to understand how to cope with different challenges and how they can develop resilience.

Governors work closely in partnership with the local authority and school leaders. They support and challenge school leaders effectively. Leaders are clear about which aspects of provision could be even better.

Safeguarding

Arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders carry out appropriate pre-employment checks on staff. They provide regular, timely training to ensure that staff are aware of risks to pupils. This helps staff to spot when there are concerns. Staff know whom to pass concerns on to. School leaders ensure that pupils and their families get help quickly. This includes support from their own pastoral team. The school works well with a range of agencies to keep pupils safe.

Pupils learn how to stay safe when online and how to take care of their mental health.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Not all curriculum plans provide clarity on the precise knowledge that pupils need to learn and remember to help them with future learning. Teachers are then not clear about what the most important learning is. Some lessons contain too much knowledge and pupils do not build on their previous learning. Leaders must ensure that all curriculum plans provide clear information about what the most important knowledge is at each stage of learning, so that pupils build on previous knowledge effectively.
- Teachers do not use assessment consistently well in all subjects to identify gaps in pupils' learning and adapt future teaching. Pupils then do not learn everything intended. Leaders must ensure that teachers use information from their checks on pupils' learning to inform their planning, so that sequences of lessons help pupils to remember important knowledge.

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	117388
Local authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	10241105
Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	31
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Kathy Dunnett
Headteacher	Sarah Bridgman
Website	www.tonwell.herts.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	11 May 2021, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- Several members of the governing body are new to the school.
- The school is now part of a federation with another local, small school.
- The school runs a breakfast and after-school club.
- The most recent inspection of the school's denominational education and collective worship under section 48 of the Education Act 2005 was in January 2017, when the school was judged to be good.
- The school does not use alternative provision for its pupils.

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 had 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 carried out deep dives in reading, mathematics, religious education and science. For each deep dive, inspectors considered the design of the curriculum, spoke with subject leaders, visited lessons, scrutinised pupils' books or listened to children reading, and spoke with teachers and pupils.
- Inspectors spoke with the local authority improvement partner.
- To inspect safeguarding, meetings were held with the designated safeguarding lead, teachers and pupils. Inspectors also reviewed records, policies and documents relating to safeguarding.
- Inspectors spoke with governors and the leaders with responsibility for SEND and early years provision.
- To gather pupils' views, inspectors observed and spoke with pupils, including at breaktimes, and took account of the nine responses to Ofsted's survey of pupils' views.
- Inspectors reviewed the 16 responses and the 16 free-text comments submitted to Ofsted Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire for parents and carers.
- The inspectors took account of the 10 responses to Ofsted's staff survey.

Inspection team

Debbie Rogan, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Lesley Daniel

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