

Inspection of Wittersham Church of England Primary School

The Street, Wittersham, Tenterden, Kent TN30 7EA

Inspection dates:	3 and 4 June 2025
The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Good
Early years provision	Good
Previous inspection grade	Good

What is it like to attend this school?

Wittersham Church of England Primary School is a welcoming and highly nurturing environment. From their arrival in Reception, children make a happy and positive start to their education. Pupils' needs are very well understood and catered for and, as a result, across the school, pupils achieve well. Pupils benefit particularly well from the recently established nurture provision, 'The Orchard'. Pupils value having a safe space where they can be calm and manage their emotions. In 'The Orchard', pupils receive expert support to help them catch up on their learning. Many parents and carers recognise the high-quality support their children with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) receive.

Pupils consistently meet the high expectations that staff have of their behaviour and attitudes. They are polite, kind and respectful. As a result, positive relations are a real strength in the school. Pupils feel safe, heard and cared for. They know that staff take their concerns and ideas seriously. Pupils welcome the opportunities they are given to be active and responsible members of their community. Through the school council and eco-council, pupils model their leadership skills by helping to make positive changes to the school, such as deciding on new playground equipment.

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

The school has planned an ambitious curriculum for pupils. From the early years upwards, pupils develop strong foundations in their learning that prepare them well for their next steps. The needs of pupils with SEND are well understood and catered for. As a result, pupils, including those with SEND, achieve well.

The learning environment, from the early years upwards, is well considered and thoughtfully resourced to match pupils' needs. Teachers explain new concepts clearly and mostly demonstrate expertise in the subjects they teach. Pupils enjoy learning and are enthusiastic to deepen their understanding and to contribute their ideas to class discussions. Sometimes, staff do not make clear the specific knowledge they want pupils to learn. This occasionally leads to teaching choices that are not sufficiently well linked to the intended learning. When this happens, pupils do not learn as effectively as they could. The school identifies the needs of pupils with SEND accurately and swiftly. This allows pupils to have the support they need without delay.

The school has recently improved systems for checking pupils' understanding. Over time, particularly in reading, writing and mathematics, the school accurately identifies gaps in learning and supports pupils to catch up quickly through well-matched interventions. However, sometimes these checks are not being used. As a result, activity choices are not consistently well-matched to where pupils are in their learning. Misconceptions are sometimes missed, and, at times, pupils are insufficiently challenged by the tasks they are working on.

Reading is highly prioritised in the school. Children start to learn phonics as soon as they start in Reception. Through high-quality regular phonics and reading routines, pupils

quickly become accurate and fluent readers. The school carefully considers the book choices that pupils read and explore so that they develop a love of reading from an early age.

Pupils routinely model the school values and live the 'Wittersham way'. Starting from Reception, children behave very well. They learn to take turns, to listen and to express their feelings. The school provides highly effective support to pupils who struggle to manage their emotions so that they can experience the same enjoyment and success in their learning as their peers. Most pupils attend school regularly and punctually, ready to learn. The school takes swift and appropriate action when pupils do not attend as often as they should.

Pupils are well supported in understanding how to maintain positive mental health. They learn how to keep themselves safe online and when cycling or walking on public roads. Pupils learn about a wide range of world religions, which supports their understanding of different faith perspectives. However, pupils' understanding of wider aspects of diversity, including different cultures, is not as well developed. Pupils recognise the importance of treating people equally, but they are not consistently aware of the broad range of human differences in the wider community. The school recognises the importance of pupils' deepening their understanding of diversity to ensure that they are best prepared for the next stages of their learning and development. The school has started to address this through greater diversity in the curriculum and plans to introduce a broader range of cultural experiences.

Leaders have a clear understanding of the school's strengths and focus on the right priorities for improving provision further. They are considerate of staff well-being and workload. Governors provide highly effective challenge and support to leaders through a shared ambition to provide the best possible start for pupils.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Sometimes, the intended learning is not clear. When this is the case, activity choices do not support pupils in focusing on the most important knowledge they need to learn. The school should ensure that teaching activities consistently link to the intended learning so that pupils have sufficient opportunity to develop their understanding of important knowledge.
- Systems to check pupils' understanding are not used consistently. As a result, some pupils are not building on the learning they are already confident with, because their starting points have not been considered when setting tasks. Similarly, misconceptions can sometimes be missed. The school should ensure that checks on understanding

happen regularly and consistently so that activity choices match where pupils are in their learning.

- Opportunities for pupils to widen their understanding of diversity are not as well developed as they could be. As a result, some pupils have insufficient awareness of cultures and issues beyond their local community. The school should ensure that its plans to widen diversity within the curriculum, and through enrichment opportunities, are put into action swiftly.

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	118740
Local authority	Kent
Inspection number	10379809
Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	135
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	John Collins
Headteacher	Stella Coulson
Website	www.wittersham.kent.sch.uk
Dates of previous inspection	28 January 2020, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- There has been a recent change in leadership. The headteacher has been in post since February 2025, and in an acting capacity since September 2024.
- The school does not currently use any alternative provision.
- The school was last inspected under section 48 of the Education Act, 2005, in November 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 provision). Schools receiving a graded inspection from September 2024 will not be given an overall effectiveness grade.

- Inspections are a point-in-time evaluation of 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 met with senior leaders, staff and pupils. The lead inspector also met with representatives from the governing body.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics and geography. 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 considered other subjects.
- Inspectors considered the responses to the Ofsted Parent View questionnaire, including the free-text comments. They also took account of the responses to the confidential staff survey and gathered the views of both staff and pupils throughout the inspection.
- Inspectors reviewed and scrutinised a range of the school's documentation, including leaders' plans for improving the school, minutes of governing body meetings and records of attendance and behaviour incidents.
- 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.

Inspection team

Tash Hurtado, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Sara Wakefield

Ofsted Inspector

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