

Inspection of a good school: Esher Church School

Milbourne Lane, Esher, Surrey KT10 9DU

Inspection dates:

1 and 2 May 2024

Outcome

Esher Church School continues to be a good school.

The headteacher and chief executive officer of this school is Benjamin Foley. This school is governed by a single academy trust, Esher Church School Academy Trust, which means other people also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is overseen by a board of trustees. The interim chair is Gerard Harper.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils, staff, parents and carers are overwhelmingly positive about this school as it grows from strength to strength. As one parent wrote, 'Children skip through the gates in the morning.' Attendance is high. Pupils show great enthusiasm for learning and the many experiences that school life offers. For example, all Year 4 pupils learn the clarinet. Pupils relish attending school clubs, such as chess, cricket and 'knit and natter'. They especially like their tennis lessons at the neighbouring tennis club.

The school is highly ambitious for all. There is a drive for excellence in all aspects of the school. Pupils work hard and reach these expectations. For example, published outcomes at the end of key stage 2 in 2023 showed that pupils achieved significantly better than the national averages in reading, writing and mathematics at the higher standard.

Pupils are proud to take on positions of responsibility. Just as the school's vision states, they 'believe that they can make a difference'. For example, 'eco-ambassadors' are actively trying to reduce single-use plastic following their data collection about plastic waste. Staff encourage pupils to think of others. Pupils have raised money for the Red Cross by running the 'mini-London marathon' recently.

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

There have been many positive changes at this aspirational school recently. The school has raised expectations for all pupils even higher. There is a broad and effective curriculum. Whereas pupils learn well currently, staff want pupils to learn even better.

The school has decided on a new curriculum for many subjects for a launch in September 2024. In some subjects and in some year groups, the school is trialling this new curriculum. With this new curriculum comes increased clarity about what teachers need to teach. This is already having a positive impact on pupils' learning. However, at this present time, this means that pupils are learning better in some subjects than they are in others. The school has evaluated the impact of their current curriculum thoroughly. The school knows that at times, in some foundation subjects, the current curriculum is not as clear about what pupils need to learn as it could be. When this is the case, teachers do not systematically check how well pupils learn the curriculum over time. They are not sure what pupils need to remember. This hampers how well pupils learn.

Teachers' subject knowledge is strong. They introduce new learning clearly, modelling language and vocabulary effectively. Teachers question pupils well. They spot misconceptions in lessons and act on these quickly. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are identified swiftly. Teachers pre-teach and plan adaptations carefully for pupils with SEND and consider individual needs well. Pupils with SEND learn the same curriculum as their peers and achieve well.

The reading culture is strong. A love of books permeates through classrooms and playgrounds. Children in Reception relish listening to stories and talking about their favourite characters. Older pupils love reading with younger children as part of the 'big friends, little friends' initiative. Well-trained staff teach the phonics programme consistently well. Reading books are well matched to the phonics sounds that pupils know. Pupils who need extra help in reading receive well-designed additional support.

Since the last inspection, there has been a successful focus on improving behaviour. Pupils understand the three school rules 'ready, respectful and safe' well. Children in the early years listen carefully, share and follow instructions closely. On the whole, pupils' attitudes to learning are strong.

The school's personal development curriculum helps pupils to understand the importance of acceptance and respect. Pupils take an active part in the local community. For example, they sing and read to residents in a local care home. Pupils know how to stay healthy and safe, including how to stay safe online. There are a range of opportunities to develop talents and interests outside of the classroom. For example, Year 5 pupils talk excitedly about learning how to abseil and rock climb on their residential trip the week after this inspection.

Staff are proud to work here. They appreciate the quality of the professional development they receive preceding the full curriculum launch. Staff are positive about the recent changes that have taken place. They work with determination to strengthen the quality of education even further. Trustees offer effective support and challenge.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In some foundation subjects, there is not always enough clarity in what pupils need to learn and remember over time. Pupils learn well, but they do not learn as well as they could. The school should continue to implement the ambitious curriculum development plans, and monitor the impact over time, so that all pupils achieve exceptionally well across the whole curriculum.

Background

When we have judged a school to be good, we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains good. 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 would now receive a higher or lower grade, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection, which 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 good in January 2019.

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	141733
Local authority	Surrey
Inspection number	10321995
Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	372
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Gerard Harper
Headteacher	Benjamin Foley
Website	www.esherchurchschool.co.uk
Dates of previous inspection	8 and 9 January 2019, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school converted to academy status in March 2015 and is governed by a single academy trust, Esher Church School Academy Trust.
- Since the last inspection, a new headteacher and a new deputy headteacher have taken up post.
- Esher Church School is a Church of England school in the Diocese of Guildford. The school's last section 48 inspection was in January 2018.
- The school does not currently use any alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

- 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. The inspector discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and has taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- The inspector carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics and history. For each deep dive, the inspector discussed the curriculum with subject

leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. The inspector heard pupils read to members of staff.

- She also looked at other aspects of the school's curriculum.
- The inspector met with leaders, staff and pupils. She met with four trustees and spoke to the chair of the trustees on the telephone.
- She held a telephone conversation with the school's improvement partner.
- The inspector spoke with groups of pupils about their experiences at school. She considered the views of pupils shared through Ofsted's online survey for pupils.
- The inspector spoke with staff about their workload and well-being. She considered the views of staff shared through Ofsted's online survey for staff.
- The inspector considered the responses to Ofsted Parent View, including the free-text responses.
- 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.

Inspection team

Lea Hannam, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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