

Checkendon Church of England (A) Primary School

URN: 123200 | Inspected: 18 November 2025

Safeguarding

standards met

The safeguarding standards are met. This means that leaders and/or those responsible for governance and oversight fulfil their specific responsibilities and have established an open culture in which safeguarding is everyone's responsibility and concerns are actively identified, acted upon and managed. As a result, pupils are made safer and feel safe.

Achievement

Expected standard

Overall, pupils achieve well. This is reflected in the above-average outcomes in the key stage 2 statutory tests, with a notably high proportion of pupils reaching the higher standard. On the whole, disadvantaged pupils, including pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, achieve well from their starting points. Younger pupils get off to a great start when learning to read. They secure their knowledge of early mathematics. However, achievement in writing is more varied. Some younger pupils do not securely develop key writing skills such as letter formation and sentence construction. Consequently, some pupils are not prepared well enough for key stage 1. Across the school, current pupils develop appropriate knowledge and skills across a broad range of subjects. Strengths in older pupils' reading enables them to access a range of high-quality texts that support their learning in other subjects. Older pupils leave the school well prepared for secondary school.

Curriculum and teaching

Expected standard

Leaders have put in place a suitably broad, ambitious and well-sequenced curriculum. They know where it is working well and where further refinements are needed. Throughout the school, reading is a priority. Staff carefully choose texts that support pupils' fluency and comprehension. Teaching ensures that pupils build their vocabulary well. The effective teaching of phonics enables pupils to achieve early success with reading. From early years onwards, pupils build their knowledge of mathematics securely. However, the school's approach to early writing is not as well developed. As a result, some of the youngest children lack some of the knowledge and skills needed to become fluent writers. Across the curriculum, knowledgeable staff are adept at explaining and modelling concepts and new learning. They engage pupils well in discussions. Staff generally pick up and address misconceptions and gaps in pupils' knowledge. On the whole, tasks are well designed to build pupils' learning. Staff have a secure understanding of pupils' needs and vulnerabilities. They support pupils well and adapt learning when this is needed. Staff use information from pupils' education, health and care plans to ensure that the curriculum is carefully planned around pupils' needs and long-term targets. They provide sensitive support so that pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities achieve success and can fully access the curriculum.

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Early years Needs attention

Leaders are ambitious for children to achieve well. Rightly, they have identified that the early years curriculum needs to be strengthened, particularly the teaching of early writing and the quality of independent learning activities. Some children are not prepared well enough for Year 1. Leaders' work to ensure that children build their knowledge and skills more effectively over time is underway. Phonics is taught well. This means that children get off to a great start with learning to read. Staff ensure that children enjoy daily stories, songs and rhymes which help to develop their communication and language skills. Children delight in joining in with familiar action songs such as 'Five Fat Sausages'. Staff engage children in conversation and introduce children to new, ambitious vocabulary. Staff model language using phrases such as 'I wonder' to encourage children to express their ideas. Staff forge positive, warm relationships with children, enabling them to feel safe, emotionally secure and happy. Typically, children play together well. They follow the school's routines and expectations readily and behave sensibly. The school works effectively with families to help children settle quickly and adjust confidently to school life.

What it's like to be a pupil at this school

Pupils are proud to belong to this happy village school. Staff ensure that every pupil feels a valued part of this close-knit community. Staff look after pupils well and are alert and responsive to any worries. As a result, pupils feel safe. Pupils benefit from the school's wide-ranging clubs. From running club to yoga, there is something for everyone. Pupils make the most of all that the school has to offer. Outdoor learning in the woodland is a well-established approach used to support pupils' learning. It offers rich opportunities for pupils to develop their understanding across the curriculum within the natural environment. Pupils enjoy helping out in school and taking on leadership roles, such as being a school councillor or a house captain. These experiences and opportunities enrich pupils' learning, and foster a sense of responsibility and citizenship. Pupils behave very well and are keen to learn. They follow the school's well-established routines and learning takes place without interruption. Kindness and courtesy are the norm and there is a culture of mutual respect. Bullying or any form of unkindness are rare. Staff deal with any minor issues swiftly. Lunchtimes are happy, social occasions when pupils enjoy playing together, including with their friends in other year groups. However, while pupils enjoy school, some do not attend school regularly enough. The school has high expectations for every pupil, no matter the challenges that some may face. Typically, staff know pupils well and ensure that those who need extra help get the right support to enable them to achieve and thrive. Pupils leave the school as well-rounded individuals, ready to embrace the challenges of secondary education and life beyond school. Nonetheless, inconsistencies in the provision in early years mean that some children are not prepared well enough for key stage 1.

Next steps

- Leaders need to strengthen the quality of the early years curriculum, including the school's approach to early writing, so that children achieve well across each area of learning and are fully prepared for Year 1.
- Leaders need to maintain their sharp focus on attendance and strengthen further their strategic analysis so that recent improvements in pupils' attendance are sustained over time.

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Inclusion

Expected standard

Leaders have created a welcoming and inclusive community where new pupils are supported to settle quickly and feel part of school life. Leaders and staff know pupils well and are typically attentive to their individual needs, particularly those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, disadvantaged pupils and other vulnerable pupils. The school's carefully considered approach enables leaders to identify pupils' additional needs swiftly and accurately. They ensure that pupils receive timely help and guidance. Close collaboration with families and external professionals enables support and adaptations to be tailored around pupils' needs. The school provides training to enable staff to match provision to pupils' individual needs. Pupil premium funding is used appropriately so that support for disadvantaged pupils is targeted and impactful. Leaders focus on meeting pupils' academic and personal needs while reducing barriers to learning. Generally, staff use approaches that enable pupils to experience success. Leaders maintain clear strategic oversight of inclusion, regularly reviewing and adapting provision in response to pupils' changing needs. This ensures that support remains relevant and is typically effective. Alternative provision is commissioned appropriately and is always focused on pupils' best interests.

Leadership and governance

Expected standard

Leaders set high expectations and are committed to providing the best possible education and care to all pupils, particularly the most vulnerable. Their actions reflect their belief that every pupil should achieve well, flourish and enjoy learning. Pupils' interests remain central to leaders' decision-making. Leaders know the school well. They understand its strengths and prioritise their work to address aspects of the school that need further development. Leaders have responded effectively to fluctuating pupil numbers, for example by adapting class structures and curriculum design to maintain a well-sequenced curriculum. Leaders' work to strengthen reading has brought greater consistency, helping pupils to build strong foundations for future learning. They have managed these improvements well, balancing ambition with consideration for staff wellbeing and workload. Leaders ensure that staff benefit from professional learning and guidance which help to enhance their expertise. Leaders have built a committed staff team that works together for the benefit of pupils. The school collaborates with other leaders in education and the local authority to continually strengthen practice and outcomes for pupils. Governors understand and fulfil their responsibilities. They continue to monitor leaders' workload, recognising the many demands on them. There are appropriate systems in place for governance oversight and accountability. Leaders build effective partnerships with parents and carers who speak highly of the way the school engages with them and the 'family feel' of the school. They, too, feel part of this community where everyone belongs.

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Personal development and wellbeing

Expected standard

Leaders have created a community that celebrates diversity, welcomes all and fosters a genuine sense of belonging. The school's core values of respect, integrity, courage, compassion and hope are lived out in daily life. These guide pupils' behaviour and form the foundation of the positive relationships that permeate the school. Pupils develop a 'moral compass' and know what it means to act with integrity. They learn about different beliefs and world celebrations, reinforcing their understanding of tolerance and difference. The recently introduced, well-considered personal, social and health education programme is aligned to the statutory guidance for relationships, sex and health education. It teaches pupils about important topics such as how to stay healthy and safe, including when online. However, the curriculum needs further time to embed so that pupils develop a detailed knowledge of some topics. 'World news' lessons broaden pupils' perspectives and understanding of current social and moral issues. Pupils actively support charitable events. They help others and develop a sense of social responsibility. The school's leadership roles such as play leaders and lunchtime 'helping hands' promote citizenship and responsibility. The school's many and wide-ranging clubs are highly valued. Pupils benefit from outdoor activities in the woodland that offer hands-on learning about topics such as animals and plants. They enjoy many opportunities to make music and take part in competitive sports. Educational visits and residential trips enrich pupils' experiences. Leaders ensure that disadvantaged pupils can access the school's rich offer. They carefully track involvement and ensure that there are no financial barriers to pupils' participation in wider opportunities. Leaders have established a culture of care, with effective pastoral support. Pupils are taught to recognise, name and manage their emotions. Staff provide pupils with helpful guidance about how to navigate different social situations. Needs attention

Attendance and behaviour Needs attention

In recent years, attendance has been below the national average, including for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Leaders have an incisive understanding of individual pupils' attendance. They engage with specialist services and work in close partnership with parents. This helps leaders to understand and address barriers to regular attendance. However, while the actions leaders are taking to address attendance issues are starting to improve pupils' attendance, the school's work to develop a clearer understanding of pupil groups, trends and patterns around attendance is still in the early stages. This means, that for some pupils, it is too soon to determine the full impact of this work. Positive relationships are at the heart of leaders' approach to establishing consistently high standards of behaviour. Day-to-day routines are well established and work well. Staff provide sensitive support to those pupils who need help to manage their behaviour and emotions. In class and around the school, pupils behave very well. They demonstrate highly positive attitudes to learning and flourish in this nurturing school community. Pupils are supportive and kind to each other, with older pupils happily supporting their younger friends.

Bullying or any form of unkindness are rare. Pupils know that they are listened to and that any concerns are quickly dealt with.

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For detailed performance data including disadvantage gap analysis, historical trends, and comparison tables, visit the school's profile on WhatSchool:

<https://whatschool.ai/en/school/checkendon-church-of-england-a-primary-school-checkendon>