

Inspection of a school judged outstanding for overall effectiveness before September 2024: Countess Anne Church of England School

School Lane, Hatfield, Hertfordshire AL10 8AX

Inspection dates:

28 and 29 January 2025

Outcome

Countess Anne Church of England School has taken effective action to maintain the standards identified at the previous inspection.

The headteacher of this school is David Lodge. This school is the sole member of the Countess Anne Church of England School single-academy trust. The trust is overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Murray Gifkins.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils thrive at this very happy school. They love learning here. The school is determined that all pupils are the best that they can be. Staff ensure that pupils are safe and able to focus fully on their learning. If pupils need additional support, they receive it. The curriculum is very well designed and is taught in exciting ways. Consequently, pupils work enthusiastically and achieve highly.

The school provides a myriad of opportunities to develop pupils' talents and interests. Elected pupil 'Make Believers' have an important role in the school. They plan and lead charity campaigns. Pupils run a raft of clubs such as chess, computing and dance. They take part in musical productions and competitions. Pupils make films about their work. These are shown to parents and carers at a local cinema during the annual 'Cannes film week.' Trips are built into all key stages, including a residential trip to Snowdonia. Pupils participate fully in this rich offer.

Pupils learn how to stay safe. They understand the importance of personal space and consent. Pupils know how to use the internet safely.

Pupils treat each other and adults with respect and kindness. Because they relish coming to school, pupils attend exceptionally well.

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

The school's impressive curriculum is ambitious, carefully considered and engaging. It often goes beyond the national curriculum. Pupils learn topics, such as the Roman empire in history, in real depth. In physical education (PE), pupils learn how to fence. The ambitious curriculum is enhanced by STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) weeks and stimulating homework projects in key stage 2. These deepen pupils' understanding and develop pupils' independent learning.

The curriculum identifies what pupils need to know, and the order in which they should learn it. Once pupils have grasped important knowledge they move securely onto new content. There are regular opportunities for pupils to revisit and recall prior learning. This helps knowledge to stick in pupils' memory. Teachers use their strong subject knowledge to present new knowledge clearly. They carefully check what pupils have learned and adjust the tasks effectively to address any misunderstandings. Pupils get clear feedback from staff. They use this to improve their work.

The school precisely identifies pupils' special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Staff are highly trained. They adapt how they teach with real skill to meet pupils' needs. As a result, pupils progress very well through the curriculum.

The school, and its pupils, understand the importance and joy of reading. From Reception, teachers help pupils blend sounds into words. As pupils learn phonics, they learn how to form letters, they write and spell with accuracy. Pupils become increasingly fluent and accurate readers, and clear and expressive writers. Those pupils who need additional support and practice receive the help they need. They therefore are able to access the curriculum successfully.

Children in Reception gain strong foundations for their future learning. They enjoy listening to a diverse range of stories. Children learn to play and share with each other. Staff model language precisely and carefully with children. This supports children to learn to communicate with confidence and clarity.

Staff have clear expectations of how pupils should behave. Almost all pupils behave very well. Pupils focus on their work in lessons and get on well with each other out at playtimes. On the few occasions when this does not happen, staff work with pupils to understand where they went wrong, and the impact of their actions. This swiftly improves pupils' behaviour.

Pupils are exceptionally well prepared for life in modern Britain. They are introduced to the world of work when they meet adults from a range of careers. Pupils learn how to contribute meaningfully to the wider community. They sing for elderly residents in nearby care homes. Pupils take part in important commemorative events such as Remembrance Day. Pupils learn about diversity when they visit different faiths' places of worship. This gives pupils a strong sense of their place in the world.

The school constantly reflects on how well its provision is improving the life chances of pupils. At all levels, staff seek to further develop the school's offer. Staff greatly enjoy working here. They receive high-quality support to develop their expertise. They are fully supported with their well-being and workload. Parents are very positive about the quality of the school's provision for their children.

Governors and trustees rigorously check the work of the school, including that it fulfils its statutory duties.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Background

Until September 2024, on a graded (section 5) inspection we gave schools an overall effectiveness grade, in addition to the key and provision judgements. Overall effectiveness grades given before September 2024 will continue to be visible on school inspection reports and on Ofsted's website. From September 2024 graded inspections will not include an overall effectiveness grade. This school was, before September 2024, judged to be outstanding for its overall effectiveness.

We have now inspected the school to determine whether it has taken effective action to maintain the standards identified at that previous inspection. 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's work has improved significantly or that it may not be as strong as it was at the last inspection, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection. A graded inspection 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 outstanding for overall effectiveness in October 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	140238
Local authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	10378535
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	208
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Murray Gifkins
Headteacher	David Lodge
Website	www.countessanneprimary.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	15 and 16 October 2019, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- Countess Anne Church of England Primary School is sponsored by the Diocese of St Albans. It has a Christian character. The religious aspects of the school's provision were last inspected in May 2022 under section 48 of the Education Act 2005.
- The school does not currently use any alternative provision for pupils.
- The school offers before- and after-school provision for pupils.

Information about this inspection

- Inspections are a point-in-time evaluation 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 his evaluation of the school.

- The inspector met with the headteacher and other senior staff, including the special educational needs and/or disabilities co-ordinator.
- The inspector spoke with the chair, and members, of the local governing body.
- The inspector visited a sample of lessons, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- The inspector also looked at the work of the school to develop pupils' cultural capital and sense of community.
- 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' interest first.
- The inspector spoke with several groups of pupils and observed their behaviour at breaktime and lunchtime.
- The inspector considered the responses and free-text comments to Ofsted Parent View. Inspectors took account of responses to Ofsted's staff and pupil surveys. He also spoke to a parent on the phone.

Inspection team

Steve Woodley, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for children looked after, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

This publication is available at <http://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/>.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.gov.uk/ofsted

© Crown copyright 2025