

Inspection of a school judged good for overall effectiveness before September 2024: Ermine Street Church Academy

2 Swynford Road, Alconbury Weald PE28 4XG

Inspection dates:

5 and 6 November 2024

Outcome

Ermine Street Church Academy has taken effective action to maintain the standards identified at the previous inspection.

The headteacher of this school is Ayellet McDonnell. This school is part of the Diocese of Ely Multi Academy Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer (CEO), Adrian Ball, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Helen Jackson.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils enjoy school. They are happy. Pupils have positive relationships with staff. They say they feel safe in all areas of the school. They cooperate well with one another in lessons and around school. Pupils understand the school's values, including the value of respect, which they show in the way they listen to each other and talk to visitors.

The school aspires for pupils to be successful and remember their learning. Pupils can explain their recent learning, as well as what they have learned in previous academic years. Pupils take pride in presenting their work neatly. Pupils enjoy the opportunities the school provides to broaden their horizons. They look forward to educational visits that connect with their learning in the classroom. Pupils develop their sense of responsibility as they become playleaders and school envoys. They take part in elections for pupil leadership positions, which helps them understand how democracy works.

Pupils understand how staff want them to behave. They know that all staff have the same expectations. Consequently, they behave very well in their classrooms and around the school. In lessons, pupils listen to their teachers and follow instructions. They are keen to answer questions. If they do not understand, they feel confident to ask for help.

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

The school, with the support of the trust, has designed an ambitious curriculum. It is well

designed and sequenced. It has identified exactly what it wants pupils to know and remember in each subject. It has trained teachers and teaching assistants so their subject knowledge is strong. Teachers regularly check what pupils have learned. They identify what pupils new to the school already know and what more they need to learn. This means any pupils at risk of falling behind quickly get the support they need to catch up.

Teachers have strong subject knowledge. They present new learning clearly. This helps pupils to understand and achieve well. For example, teachers in Reception are knowledgeable about teaching early mathematics. They make sure children have many opportunities to use and understand numbers. Children practise what they have learned. This ensures that children are ready for Year 1.

The school ensures that all pupils gain the knowledge and skills needed to read. Early reading books are matched to the sounds pupils are learning. If pupils fall behind, the school identifies this and gives them extra help. The school encourages reading for pleasure, and pupils in Reception take home a variety of books to share with parents. This helps them to become more fluent. There is a new library which contains a wide variety of books. This exposure to books contributes towards pupils developing a love of reading.

The school identifies the needs of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Support plans outline exactly what pupils need to make progress through the curriculum. Sometimes, this is through the support of teaching assistants, and other times, it is through the use of specific apparatus or adjustments to the way pupils record their work. Pupils learn the intended curriculum and remember more. The school provides a bespoke curriculum for those pupils who need it. However, the school has not clearly explained the system to parents. Consequently, some parents of pupils with SEND do not think their child is getting the help they need.

The school makes attendance a high priority. Staff analyse the reasons some pupils do not attend as well as they could. The school swiftly takes action to help these pupils to attend more regularly. The school has also worked hard to ensure that behaviour is consistently positive. Teachers quickly establish routines in Reception. These good habits are enacted as pupils move through the school.

The school provides many opportunities for pupils' personal development. There are several sports clubs. These include football and archery. Pupils take part in competitive sports competitions with other schools. They have opportunities to learn an instrument. Pupils join in musical activities locally and nationally. Pupils learn to be independent on the residential visit in Year 6. They are encouraged to support charities, for example the air ambulance which is based nearby. This helps them to become responsible citizens.

The school prioritises staff well-being. Teachers' workload is carefully considered when introducing new initiatives. Staff at the earliest stages of their careers receive the help they need to be successful and have a positive impact on pupils.

Governors know the school well and help to improve standards. Their expertise is supported and developed well by the trust.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The school does not have clear procedures in place to share information with parents about the provision for pupils with SEND. As a result, parents do not consistently get the information they need about the strategies the school uses and the positive impact they have on pupils with SEND. The school should improve the way it communicates and works with parents to support pupils with SEND further.

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 good 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 good for overall effectiveness in May 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	141949
Local authority	Cambridgeshire
Inspection number	10345408
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	317
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Helen Jackson
CEO of the trust	Adrian Ball
Headteacher	Ayellet Mc Donnell
Website	erminestreet.demat.org.uk
Dates of previous inspection	22 and 23 May 2019, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- This school is part of the Diocese of Ely Multi-Academy Trust.
- The school does not use any alternative provision.
- The school has a Christian character and was last inspected under section 48 of the Education Act 2005 on 13 February 2019.

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 their evaluation of the school.
- The inspector met with the headteacher and staff. She also met with the director of education and the hub director from the trust. The inspector met with the CEO from

the trust, as well as the chair of governors.

- 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.
- The inspector visited a sample of lessons, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- The inspector observed behaviour in lessons and around the school site. She spoke with pupils about their experiences of the school.
- The inspector reviewed a range of documents, including curriculum plans; the school's self-evaluation; policies; and documentation on behaviour, attendance and pupil suspensions.
- The inspector considered 98 responses to the online survey, Ofsted Parent View, and 79 free-text comments submitted. The inspector also considered 23 responses to Ofsted's survey for staff.

Inspection team

Linda Allison, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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