

Inspection of Pathfinder CofE Primary School

Pathfinder Way, Northstowe, Cambridge, Cambridgeshire CB24 3DS

Inspection dates: 11 and 12 June 2024

Overall effectiveness	Good
The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Good
Early years provision	Requires improvement
Previous inspection grade	Not previously inspected under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

The headteacher of this school is Claire Eskelson. 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, Adrian Ball, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Helen Jackson.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are happy and safe at Pathfinder. Staff are positive role models. They teach pupils how to be respectful and kind. This is reflected in the way that pupils conduct themselves in lessons and at playtimes. Overall, pupils behave very well.

Expectations for what pupils can achieve have risen considerably over the past year. Pupils' knowledge is improving thanks to the improved curriculum in Years 1 to 6. Classrooms are well organised and positive places in which to learn. In the early years, change has been slower. Children are starting to benefit from the changes the school and trust have made. However, there is more to do to ensure that children in the early years are as well prepared for Year 1 as they should be.

Some older pupils learn to be responsible through taking on leadership roles such as sports or play leaders. This gives pupils a chance to contribute to wider school life. Pupils enjoy the extra activities they can attend. They value being members of the choir or representing the school at sporting events. These help to support pupils to develop some of the talents and interests they have.

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

The school has recently undergone significant change. The school has expanded, and class sizes have grown. As a result, the curriculum has been reorganised. In most subjects, the school has introduced new curriculums for key stages 1 and 2. These clearly set out the knowledge that pupils need to understand as they get older. In a few subjects, the school is in the process of reviewing curriculum plans. Here, the important knowledge is not as clearly set out or well organised. This makes it harder to plan sequences of lessons that build pupils' knowledge over time.

Teachers typically present information clearly to pupils. A sharp focus on improving the quality of pupils' writing has improved standards across the curriculum. Pupils organise and present their work with pride, reflecting their good attitudes in lessons.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) in Years 1 to 6 are supported well. Staff understand how to adapt learning appropriately. This helps pupils with SEND to learn the same curriculum content as their peers.

Staff check pupils' understanding at the end of each topic. However, they are not as precise at questioning pupils to check what they have understood during lessons. This means there are occasions where teachers do not identify gaps in pupils' knowledge or misconceptions. While pupils' understanding is improving, some still have gaps in their knowledge.

Older pupils enjoy reading and choosing books from the good range available to them in their classrooms. A new phonics scheme is bringing improvements to the speed and confidence with which younger pupils learn to read fluently. Staff in the early years and in key stage 1 have received training in how to teach phonics

effectively. While, overall, staff have the subject knowledge they need to teach reading effectively, there are some instances where teaching is less precise. The school understands where further training and guidance are needed.

Changes in the early years are not as far advanced as in the rest of the school. While the school and trust have acted decisively to identify where improvements are required, there is more to do. The early years curriculum does not clearly identify how learning will build from Nursery to Reception or from Reception to Year 1. This makes it hard for staff to plan and lead learning activities that meet children's needs, including for children with SEND. On occasions, children do not learn to manage their feelings and emotions. As a result, children are not as well prepared for key stage 1 as they should be.

Typically, pupils show high levels of conduct and good manners. This helps the large number of pupils who join at different times of the school year settle in very quickly. They feel welcomed and part of the school. The school has a sharp focus on improving attendance. This has resulted in decreasing numbers of pupils who are persistently absent.

The school follows an age-appropriate programme for pupils' personal, social and health education. Pupils understand diversity through opportunities to learn about different cultures and beliefs within their own community and the wider world.

Staff are positive about working at Pathfinder. They value the way leaders support them to manage their workload and well-being. Teachers appreciate the professional development opportunities provided.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The curriculum for early years does not identify clearly how knowledge will build from Nursery through to the end of Reception. This means staff do not routinely plan learning that enables children to secure the knowledge they need. This includes for children with SEND. The school should ensure that the curriculum in early years clearly identifies how children will build their knowledge over time. The school should also ensure that staff have the training and guidance they need to teach the curriculum well, so that children are better prepared for their learning in Year 1.
- In a few subjects, the school has not identified or planned clearly enough the important knowledge pupils will learn. This makes it hard for staff to plan and teach lessons that build on pupils' prior knowledge as effectively as in other

subjects. The school should ensure that work to identify the important knowledge that pupils should learn in these subjects is completed.

- In some instances, staff do not identify or address some of the gaps in knowledge that pupils have. This means these gaps and pupils' misconceptions persist. The school should ensure that staff have the training and guidance they need to check, with precision, pupils' understanding in lessons, so that all staff address misconceptions or gaps in pupils' knowledge 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	147434
Local authority	Cambridgeshire
Inspection number	10318646
Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	2 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	441
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Helen Jackson
CEO of trust	Adrian Ball
Headteacher	Claire Eskelson
Website	pathfinder.demat.org.uk
Dates of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- The predecessor school, The Pathfinder Church of England Primary School, opened as a new school on 1 September 2017. It converted as an academy and joined the Diocese of Ely Multi Academy Trust on 1 September 2021. The predecessor school was not inspected before conversion.
- The current headteacher joined the school on an interim basis in January 2023, becoming permanent headteacher in September 2023.
- The school has provision for two-year-olds, along with Nursery and Reception classes.
- The school does not use alternative provision.
- The school is a Church of England school. It is yet to receive its first inspection of its religious character under section 48 of the Education Act, 2005.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

- 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. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in his evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics, science, geography and art. 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. The lead inspector listened to pupils read with a familiar member of staff.
- Inspectors also discussed other curriculum subjects with leaders, looked at pupils' work and visited some lessons in these subjects.
- Inspectors met with the headteacher and other members of the senior leadership team. They also met with the chair of the local governing body, the chief executive officer and the regional hub director for the trust.
- 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.
- Inspectors met with groups of staff, and with pupils from across the school. They took account of 27 responses to Ofsted's inspection survey for school staff and 119 responses to Ofsted's survey for parents, Ofsted Parent View.

Inspection team

Mark Phillips, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Amy Luu	Ofsted Inspector
Danny Wagstaff	Ofsted Inspector

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