

Inspection of Sessay Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School

Sessay, Thirsk, North Yorkshire YO7 3NA

Inspection dates: 14–15 January 2020

Overall effectiveness	Good
The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Good
Early years provision	Good
Previous inspection grade	Requires improvement

What is it like to attend this school?

Christian values underpin life in this welcoming school. Pupils are proud of their happy school family and help to make sure that everyone is safe in and around school. For example, some pupils are planning a safe pathway to the church.

Expectations have been raised since the executive headteacher took up post. Work to strengthen the curriculum has already had a significant impact. This is evident in pupils' workbooks and when listening to pupils talk about their learning. Leaders' plans show what must be done to make sure all subjects are as strong as the best.

Disruption to learning is very rare. Adults model the behaviour they expect. All ages of pupils play together at breaktimes. The older pupils enjoy taking care of the younger ones.

Pupils have a mature understanding of what bullying is. For example, they say that any incidents are isolated. Bullying incidents don't carry on because adults help to sort things out straight away.

There are a range of pupil leadership groups so pupils can make a difference in school and beyond. Pupils are helped to develop their talents and interests. They can take part in groups such as the 'Sessay Songbirds' choir, drama and sports teams.

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

The curriculum is ambitious for all pupils. Subject leaders are passionate about the subjects they lead. Curriculum plans help teachers to sequence lessons that build on pupils' knowledge. This means that pupils can use their prior knowledge to understand new learning. For example, pupils were able to compare aspects of the ancient Greek civilisation with the Romans. Teachers plan experiences that bring learning to life. Pupils say that this helps them to remember more. For example, pupils vividly recalled what they learned when visiting a Second World War museum. Plans in some subjects are not as well developed. Work to address this is under way.

Children begin to learn the sounds that letters make as soon as they start school in Reception. They have already learned a notable number of sounds. Adults are quick to spot when children need extra help to learn new sounds. This has got them off to a flying start in developing early reading skills. Any pupils who fall behind are helped to catch up quickly.

Enjoyment of reading is a high priority. Teachers read carefully chosen texts to pupils every day. This supports learning across the curriculum. For example, older pupils have enjoyed 'Kaspar, Prince of Cats' by Michael Morpurgo. This story helped them to compare the experience of rich and poor passengers on the Titanic. Adults

choose stories with rhyme and repetition for younger children. This is helping to develop strong vocabulary and language skills.

Children in the Reception class make the most of the exciting outdoor area. Children were engrossed in working together in the sandpit to build a strong 'house'. Adults plan the environment and resources well. As a result, children can practise independently what they have learned in more formal lessons. Parents appreciate opportunities to be involved in their children's learning.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) get the help they need to thrive. Staff know all pupils very well so pupils who need extra help are identified without delay.

The school's behaviour policy is understood and followed consistently by everyone. As a result, pupils know what is expected of them. Pupils are keen to learn and to do their best. They keep on trying even when they get stuck.

Adults teach pupils how to be good friends. A child in the Reception class explained why there are zips on the reflection table. She said, 'we have to zip up our friendship if we fall out'. Pupils say, 'Nothing bad happens here, everyone plays together and enjoys themselves.' Bullying is rare. Pupils and parents are confident that any bullying is dealt with promptly.

Leaders make the most of the rural environment. Pupils learn teamwork and practical skills during outdoor activities. Leaders also make sure that pupils experience the wider world. Pupils look forward to taking part in residential visits. Assemblies involve thought-provoking questions about important current events. For example, 'Are our actions more important than our words?' has focused on climate change.

Pupils learn how to be responsible citizens. They are able to join groups such as the 'Epic Improvers', 'SEG' (Sessay Eco Group) and the Health and Well-being Group. Pupils help people in the local community and further afield. They have raised money for 'send a cow' to help families in Africa. Older pupils helped older people in the community to stay safe and comfortable during the very hot weather.

Leadership and governance of the school have strengthened considerably since the previous inspection. Staff now work collaboratively across the federation. This has brought significant improvements to the quality of education.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

There is a strong culture of safeguarding. All staff and governors have had appropriate and up-to-date training. Staff know every child well and are vigilant. They report any concerns they have promptly.

Pupils are taught to understand risks and how to keep safe. They are involved in planning how to improve safety. For example, they helped to make plans for what to do if a dangerous situation developed in school. Life skills such as crossing the road and keeping safe online are an integral part of the curriculum.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Pupils experience a broad, balanced and active curriculum. Links across the curriculum and the quality texts that are used to enhance learning, help pupils to make connections between subjects and to remember what they have learned. Work to improve the curriculum so that pupils can use their prior learning to make sense of what is new has already had a significant impact in some subjects. However, not all foundation subjects are coherently planned and sequenced in sufficient detail. Current plans do show what must be taught in each subject in each year group. However, these are not detailed enough in some subjects. These plans need to be further developed so that they give more detail and make the sequence of learning clearer. It is clear from leaders' actions that they are in the process of bringing this about. For this reason, the transition arrangement has been applied in this case.

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 Ofsted Parent View information 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.

If you are the school and you are not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

In the report, '[disadvantaged pupils](#)' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route.

School details

Unique reference number	121514
Local authority	North Yorkshire
Inspection number	10121698
Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	5 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	89
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Judith Walburn and Louisa Carolan
Headteacher	Fiona Bennett (executive headteacher)
Website	http://sessay.n-yorks.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	3–4 October 2017, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- Since the previous inspection, the school has appointed a new executive headteacher and has two co-chairs of governors.
- The school is part of the Husthwaite and Sessay Church of England federation.
- The school is much smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- The number of pupils eligible for support funded by the pupil premium grant is below the national average.
- There are currently no pupils who speak English as an additional language or who are from minority ethnic groups.

Information about this inspection

We carried out this inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

- We met with the executive headteacher, the senior teachers, the special educational needs coordinator and subject leaders. We also met with a representative from the local authority and a representative from the diocese. One inspector met with members of the governing body.

- The subjects considered as part of this inspection were early reading, mathematics, science and history. We carried out deep dives into these subjects. This included meetings with senior leaders, subject leaders and teachers. It also included looking at curriculum plans and pupils' work, visiting lessons and speaking to pupils from those lessons about their learning. We also listened to pupils read to a familiar adult. We considered curriculum plans and examples of pupils work from across the curriculum.
- The arrangements for safeguarding were checked. This included checks on the single central records, staff training and safeguarding records.
- We looked at a range of documentation, including the school's improvement and evaluation plans, curriculum plans, policies, minutes from governing body meetings and information on the school's website. We also looked at information relating to safeguarding, behaviour and attendance.
- We spoke to parents in the playground, took into account the 25 responses to Ofsted's parent survey and a parent's letter to the Ofsted inspectors.
- We considered the views of the 31 pupils and 17 staff who responded to the Ofsted surveys.

Inspection team

Janet Keefe, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Andrew Soutar

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