

Inspection of Buckden CofE Primary School

School Lane, Buckden, St Neots, Cambridgeshire PE19 5TT

Inspection dates:	23 and 24 April 2025
The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Good
Early years provision	Good
Previous inspection grade	Outstanding

The headteacher of this school is Michelle Heather. The school is part of ACT multi-academy trust, which means that other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer (CEO), Alison Anderson, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Andrew Waring.

Until November 2020, the school was exempt from routine inspection because it was judged as outstanding for overall effectiveness at its previous inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005. The school has not been inspected under section 5 of the Act since July 2015. The school received an urgent inspection, under section 8 of the Act, on 19 March 2019. Since September 2024, schools have not been awarded an overall effectiveness grade.

What is it like to attend this school?

This is a warm, nurturing, inclusive school where pupils are respectful of each other. Pupils understand the importance of equality. They know how their actions can impact local, national and global communities.

Staff are very ambitious for pupils to do their best and achieve well. The older pupils like to guide their learning, knowing their achievements and what they need to do next. Younger pupils enjoy the established routines that lessons provide. Pupils contribute to lessons and work hard to ensure they do well, which they do.

Behaviour is generally positive. Most pupils know that their voice is heard and that they can speak to staff when they need to. Lunchtimes are fun and exciting times where there is a vast array of activities in which the pupils can play together, making new friends as they do.

Pupils have a range of leadership opportunities available to them, for example house captains, sports captains, pupil parliament and eco council. Pupils develop their confidence and resilience within these roles. Pupils know the importance of looking after their physical well-being. They do this by participating in a daily walk or run around the field and contributing to sports teams and events.

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

The school has a highly ambitious curriculum. It has been well thought out to ensure it covers a breadth of subjects, as set out in the national curriculum. It progresses from the early years and identifies the key knowledge that pupils need to know and remember. Staff routinely revisit this knowledge to ensure that pupils remember it.

In most subjects, staff have strong subject knowledge and present knowledge in interesting, effective ways for pupils. Staff check regularly what pupils know and remember. However, in a few subjects, teachers do not present knowledge as clearly as it could be. The activities pupils complete in these subjects are sometimes not focused on the precise knowledge that the school wants them to remember. This slows pupils' progress through the curriculum, as they do not learn and remember as much as they could.

Reading is a priority of the school. Staff thread opportunities through the week that provide pupils with a range of opportunities to enjoy and read different texts in different ways. Pupils enjoy sharing books and their favourite authors with each other, both in class and in assemblies. The teaching of reading starts as soon as the children start in the early years. Staff use their training to deliver the school's reading programme effectively. Pupils who struggle with reading receive the help and support they need to catch up quickly. This gives them the confidence they need to become fluent readers.

There are clear processes in place to identify pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). The school works collaboratively with parents and carers to ensure

that pupils with SEND achieve as well as they can. If necessary, the school accesses external support and services, which provides further help to school staff, pupils and their families. Staff are well trained to make adaptations to learning activities. This enables most pupils with SEND to access the same curriculum alongside their peers.

The school carefully tracks patterns in pupils' behaviour and responds positively to this. For example, leaders noticed an increase in playtime incidents. Changes to routines were made, ensuring that playtimes are active and engaging. This has seen a reduction in incidents and an increase in positive and respectful behaviour. Attendance has improved. The school ensures that parents and carers understand the importance of regular attendance. Where absence for individual pupils becomes a concern, the school acts quickly to address this. As a result, most pupils attend school regularly.

The school's personal development programme is well constructed to ensure that pupils know and understand the world beyond their local community. This involves learning about a range of global issues, such as sustainability. Pupils develop what they learn into sustainable actions, for example collecting crisp packets that are turned into waterproof heat-containing sleeping bags for homeless people or switching lights off when they are not needed. Pupils learn how to stay safe, including when online, through real-life examples. They develop their musical talents and interests by learning the recorder, piano and drums.

Staff are well supported with their workload, which has a positive impact on their well-being. They have a varied professional development programme available to them. Staff also share their expertise with other local schools through the professional development that they deliver. As the trust is growing, leaders' roles are changing. They are clear on what their responsibilities are and diligently complete them. Parents and staff value the school community being at the heart of the local area.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In a few subjects, the focus of teaching and the activities provided for pupils do not enable them to precisely learn the intended knowledge identified in the curriculum. Therefore, pupils do not learn and remember as much in these subjects as they could. The school should ensure that staff have the knowledge and skills to deliver the curriculum effectively in all the subjects that they teach.

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	137639
Local authority	Cambridgeshire
Inspection number	10378511
Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	5 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	340
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Andrew Waring
CEO of the trust	Alison Anderson
Headteacher	Michelle Heather
Website	www.buckdenschool.co.uk
Dates of previous inspection	8 and 9 July 2015, under section 5 of the education act 2005

Information about this school

- The school is part of ACT multi academy trust.
- The school had a no formal designation inspection, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005, in March 2019.
- This is a CofE primary school in the Diocese of Ely. The school had an inspection of its religious character under section 48 of the Education Act 2005 in June 2017. The next section 48 inspection is due within 8 years.
- The school opened in February 2012.
- The headteacher has been in post since January 2023.
- The school does not use any alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005. During a graded inspection, we grade the school for each of our key judgements

(quality of education; behaviour and attitudes; personal development; and leadership and management) and for any relevant provision judgement (early years and/or sixth form provision). Schools receiving a graded inspection from September 2024 will not be given an overall effectiveness grade.

- Inspections are a point-in-time evaluation about the quality of a school's educational provision.
- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. The inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- The lead inspector spoke with the chair of governors, the CEO and director of education from the trust, and trustees.
- The inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics, science, art and design and geography. For each deep dive, inspectors held discussions about the curriculum, visited a sample of lessons, spoke with teachers, spoke with some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors also spoke to school leaders, including those responsible for SEND, behaviour, attendance and personal development.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the 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 gathered and considered the views of pupils, parents and staff. This included considering the responses to the online survey, Ofsted Parent View, including the free-text comments.

Inspection team

Katie Devenport, lead inspector

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