

Inspection of Nutgrove Methodist Primary School

Govett Road, Nutgrove, St Helens, Merseyside WA9 5NH

Inspection dates:	11 and 12 February 2025
The quality of education	Requires improvement
Behaviour and attitudes	Requires improvement
Personal development	Requires improvement
Leadership and management	Requires improvement
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 Rachel Bottell. This school is part of the Epworth 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), Julie-Ann Hewitt, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Stuart Ellis.

Ofsted has not previously inspected Nutgrove Methodist Primary School under section 5 of the Education Act 2005. However, Ofsted previously judged the school to be outstanding for overall effectiveness, before it opened as Nutgrove Methodist Primary as a result of conversion to academy status. Since September 2024, schools have not been awarded an overall effectiveness grade.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are happy and enjoy attending Nutgrove Methodist Primary School. They feel safe in school. Pupils trust that staff will listen to any worries or concerns and help them when needed.

Most pupils behave well and have fun at playtimes with their friends. They appreciate the new playground markings which the school council helped to organise. However, the behaviour of some pupils in lessons and around school is not as positive. Some staff do not ensure that pupils follow the behaviour systems. This leads to disruption in some lessons.

The school has set out what pupils should learn. However, its expectations for what pupils can achieve are not high enough. The school has begun to develop the skills and expertise of staff in how best to deliver the curriculum. In some instances, this is beginning to make a difference to how much pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), know. Nevertheless, this is not consistent across classes and subjects. Some pupils do not achieve as well as they should.

Pupils enjoy visits to museums and art galleries that link to their learning. However, these are not carefully thought through by the school. This results in a lack of opportunity for some pupils. Pupils take on some leadership roles such as school councillors and playground leaders. While pupils enjoy these responsibilities, they are not given enough opportunities to make a difference or to have a true voice in the school.

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

In the last few years, there has been significant disruption to staffing and leadership of the school. This has negatively impacted on the quality of education that pupils receive. In recent months, trust leaders have provided greater support to the school. This has enhanced leadership capacity and is leading to some improvements across the school.

The school has a curriculum in place which begins in the early years and flows logically to Year 6. For some subjects, the school has refined the curriculum content so that it contains the essential knowledge that pupils require for the next stage of their learning. However, this is still a work in progress in other subjects. In many curriculum areas, including aspects of the early years curriculum, the key knowledge that pupils should learn and how this learning builds over time is unclear.

The delivery of the curriculum is weak across some subjects and classes, including in the early years. Staff are unsure of the knowledge that they should deliver. As a result, they do not choose the most appropriate activities or tasks to inspire or deepen pupils' learning. This goes unchecked by the school. It does not know how well pupils achieve across the curriculum. Subject leaders lack the skill to fulfil their roles successfully.

The school has a programme in place for the teaching of phonics. However, the delivery of this programme is variable across the early years and key stage 1. This means that current pupils are behind where they should be in the programme, with those who require additional support not in receipt of it. Nevertheless, as shown in the phonics screening check in 2024, most pupils are confident, fluent readers by the time that they reach Year 2.

The systems for checking pupils' learning have been introduced by the trust. However, it is too early to see the impact on pupils' retention of knowledge over time. In 2024, the attainment of Year 6 pupils in reading, writing and mathematics compared well to the national averages. However, this does not reflect the achievement of current pupils across the curriculum. While some pupils learn well, others do not demonstrate a depth of knowledge across a range of subjects. They are unable to talk with confidence about their learning.

The trust has supported staff to increase their knowledge and expertise of special educational needs. Some staff act quickly to identify when pupils may have SEND and provide them with effective support. Nonetheless, adaptations to the teaching of the curriculum to support pupils with SEND are not consistently effective across the school. This hinders how well some pupils with SEND can access the curriculum.

Pupils are polite and well-mannered. They are keen to talk to visitors and want to do well and learn more. They attend school regularly. While the school has a behaviour policy in place, this is not followed consistently well by the staff. In some lessons, pupils listen attentively and work cooperatively with one another. However, in other classes, pupils' attitudes to learning are not as strong. The school does not routinely ensure that pupils maintain focus and do not distract the learning of others.

Pupils understand fundamental British values. They have meaningful opportunities to learn about democracy. Pupils know how to be healthy. They learn about how to stay safe online and in the community. The school does not currently provide a range of extra-curricular activities. This means that pupils do not have sufficient opportunities to develop their talents and interests.

Many staff speak of the positive culture in the school. They look out for one another to support their well-being and workload. This is overseen by members of the local advisory board who are swift to act when issues are raised. They have oversight of the school and fulfil their statutory duties. However, they lack the skills and expertise to fully hold the school to account.

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 has not identified the key component knowledge in some subjects. This means that pupils, and children in the early years, do not build a rich body of knowledge over time. The school should define the essential knowledge that they want pupils to learn across the curriculum. This is so that pupils have a sufficiently secure foundation on which to build new learning.
- There are weaknesses in how the curriculum is delivered across a number of subjects, and in the early years, and this goes unchecked by the school. As a result, some pupils' learning, including those with SEND, is not secure or as deep as it could be. The school should support teachers and upskill subject leaders so that the curriculum is delivered consistently well.
- The school's work to establish effective assessment strategies is in the early stages of implementation. This means that checks on what pupils know are not as effective as they could be. This leads to gaps in pupils' knowledge. The school should ensure that staff have the skills and expertise required to identify and address pupils' gaps in learning so that they can build on what they know.
- The school does not ensure that staff follow a consistent approach to resolve low-level disruption during lessons. This means that some pupils do not behave as well as they should. The school should ensure that staff have high expectations and follow a consistent approach to support pupils' positive behaviour.
- Pupils lack sufficient opportunities to develop their talents and interests. This means that they are missing out on rich experiences that promote their wider personal development and well-being. The school should ensure that the range of extra-curricular opportunities has the necessary breadth to enable pupils to explore their talents and interests fully.
- There are gaps in the knowledge and skills of the local advisory board. This prevents it from holding the school to account. The trust should ensure that the local advisory board builds its expertise so that it can support and challenge the school more effectively in its strategies for improvement.

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	146120
Local authority	St Helens
Inspection number	10348369
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	201
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Stuart Ellis
CEO of the trust	Julie-Ann Hewitt
Headteacher	Rachel Bottell
Website	www.nutgroveprimary.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- This is a Methodist School within the North West District. The most recent section 48 inspection of the school's religious character took place in June 2023. The next section 48 inspection is due from September 2028.
- The school does not currently use alternative provision for its pupils.
- The school provides a before-school club for pupils.

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. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors spoke with leaders and with members of staff. The lead inspector held discussions with members of the board of trustees and the local advisory board. They also spoke with trust leaders, including the CEO, and met with representatives of the local authority.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics, geography and art and design. For each deep dive, they 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.
- The lead inspector observed pupils from Years 1 to 3 read to a familiar adult.
- Inspectors discussed the curriculum in some other curriculum subjects. They spoke with leaders and pupils. Inspectors reviewed samples of pupils' work in these curriculum areas.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour during lessons and around school.
- 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 reviewed a range of documents, including records of governing body and interim executive board meetings; leaders' evaluation of the school's strengths and areas for improvement and documents relating to pupils' behaviour and attendance.
- Inspectors spoke with groups of pupils about their experiences at school. They considered the views of pupils shared through Ofsted's online survey for pupils.
- Inspectors spoke with staff about their workload and well-being. They also considered the responses to Ofsted's online survey for staff.
- Inspectors considered the responses to Ofsted Parent View, including the free-text comments. They also spoke with some parents during the inspection.

Inspection team

Sue Dymond, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Ian Cooper

Ofsted Inspector

Cole Andrew

Ofsted Inspector

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