

Inspection of a good school: Saxon Way Primary School

Ingram Road, Gillingham, Kent ME7 1SJ

Inspection dates:

21–22 January 2020

Outcome

Saxon Way Primary School continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Saxon Way has a warm and welcoming ethos. Pupils feel that it is 'a safe, amazing place where everyone is friendly'. They relish the many opportunities to help in school, for instance acting as 'eco-warriors', 'playtime buddies', 'school councillors', 'peer mediators' or 'values ambassadors'.

Pupils behave well. Playtimes and lunchtimes are cheerful and sociable occasions. Pupils understand what bullying is and are adamant that it does not occur. They told me that staff are always on hand to help address minor disagreements.

There are many after-school clubs, which pupils enjoy. Pupils especially look forward to learning to play a range of musical instruments. They perform at concerts and music festivals. One pupil said: 'The clubs open our eyes to new opportunities and talents we can develop.'

Classrooms are calm and productive. Pupils are expected to work hard. They debate their ideas in a considered and mature manner. They develop a strong understanding of different faiths, cultures and communities. Several pupils told me that they treat everyone with respect and understanding. Pupils are well prepared for life in modern Britain.

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

Saxon Way provides a good quality of education. Leaders and staff have high aspirations for all pupils. They know the community which they serve well. Leaders have worked with families so that, overall, pupils' attendance has improved. However, there are still some pupils who are absent from the school too often.

Most subjects are planned effectively with a well-sequenced curriculum in place. Leaders have thought carefully about the knowledge and skills that they want pupils to learn and the order in which these are taught. However, planning is less well developed in history

and geography. Leaders have identified this and are working with staff to refine and adapt schemes of work in these subjects.

Classrooms are hives of activity. Teachers provide work that makes learning purposeful and interesting. Their subject knowledge is strong. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are fully included in all aspects of school life. Staff are well trained to identify and meet the needs of pupils with SEND. They provide extra bespoke support when required.

There is a real buzz about learning to read. This is because leaders have raised the profile of reading. Children in the early years gain firm foundations in the core skills of early reading. Pupils in key stage 1 build on these skills and read books that are well matched to the sounds they have learned. Pupils use their phonic knowledge and skills to read unfamiliar words successfully. All staff are well trained to teach phonics. Adults are able to spot when pupils fall behind and give extra help when it is needed. Pupils' achievement in the Year 1 phonics screening check is consistently above that seen nationally.

Staff and pupils share a love of reading. Teachers' enthusiasm when reading aloud is palpable. Pupils told inspectors that they enjoy reading the books that they take home. Nevertheless, pupils have too few opportunities to develop deeper understanding of the ideas that they read about in different subjects. They are not able to use and apply their reading comprehension skills equally well in all subjects.

In the early years, staff develop children's understanding of important concepts, including number and shape. Adults carefully select activities which promote children's curiosity well. For instance, children took great delight in exploring the value of different numbers, both inside and outside the classroom. They listen with concentration and are enthusiastic learners. Children are well prepared for Year 1.

All staff are committed to supporting pupils' personal development. They provide many opportunities, including residential experiences, to help pupils develop confidence and resilience. Pupils are tolerant and show a strong sense of fairness and equality in the way that they treat each other. They display a sense of moral purpose. For example, pupils were quick to suggest ways to fundraise following a visit to a local homeless shelter.

Leaders value the support and challenge provided by the trust. Leaders encourage teachers to reflect and share best practice with colleagues across the trust. There is a lively culture of professional debate, support and challenge. Teachers are highly motivated to do their best for pupils. Teachers feel well supported to manage their workload.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Pupils' safety is given the utmost importance by all the adults at this school. All staff attend regular training. Staff are knowledgeable about the community that they serve. This develops awareness of any potential risks. Staff know and use the correct procedures

for reporting and recording concerns about pupils. Such concerns are acted on in a timely way. Leaders work with other agencies where necessary, ensuring that pupils receive the support they need. Pupils know that they should speak to a trusted adult if they are worried or upset.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Overall, leaders have developed a broad, engaging curriculum for all pupils. It is well planned and sequenced in most subjects. However, leaders should continue their work to ensure that history and geography are equally well planned, so that pupils know more and remember more in these subjects.
- In some subjects, pupils have difficulty understanding the meaning of ideas when reading texts. This hinders their understanding of the topics they are taught. Leaders should ensure that teachers provide pupils with opportunities to use and apply their reading comprehension skills in all subjects. This will help pupils deepen their understanding of the concepts taught.
- Leaders have worked hard to engage parents and carers and support them to get their children to attend school regularly. Nevertheless, the proportion of pupils who are persistently absent needs to reduce further.

Background

When we have judged a school to be good, we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains good. This is called a section 8 inspection of a good school or non-exempt outstanding school. We do not give graded judgements on a section 8 inspection. However, if we find some evidence that the school could now be better than good or that standards may be declining, then the next inspection will be a section 5 inspection. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the section 8 inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will convert the section 8 inspection to a section 5 inspection immediately.

This is the first section 8 inspection since we judged the school to be good on 8–9 June 2016.

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	139928
Local authority	Medway
Inspection number	10122285
Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	356
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Trevor Edinborough
Headteacher	Angela Sandow (Head of School)
Website	http://www.saxonway-gst.org/
Date of previous inspection	8–9 June 2016, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Information about this inspection

- I held meetings with the executive headteacher, head of school, senior leaders and curriculum leaders. I also met with a range of teaching staff.
- I evaluated the quality of education by looking in detail at the teaching of reading, mathematics and geography. I discussed curriculum plans with leaders, carried out lesson visits, scrutinised pupils' work and spoke to pupils and teachers from the lessons visited about the curriculum.
- I evaluated the effectiveness of safeguarding. I reviewed the school's single central record. I met with the designated safeguarding lead and spoke to pupils, trustees, governors, staff and parents.
- I met with the chair of governors and trustees.
- I spoke with the chief executive officer for the Griffin Schools Trust and the school improvement lead.
- I considered the views of 26 members of staff who responded to Ofsted's online staff survey.
- I took account of the 30 responses to the Ofsted Parent View survey and the 14 free-text responses. I met with parents at the beginning of the first day of the inspection.

- I met with pupils to discuss their views about the school and talked to pupils informally about the school.

Inspection team

Shazia Akram, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

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