

Inspection of Little Common School

Shepherds Close, Bexhill-on-Sea, East Sussex TN39 4SQ

Inspection dates: 11–12 March 2020

Overall effectiveness

Outstanding

The quality of education

Outstanding

Behaviour and attitudes

Outstanding

Personal development

Outstanding

Leadership and management

Outstanding

Early years provision

Outstanding

Previous inspection grade

Good

What is it like to attend this school?

This is a vibrant school with a warm and kindly heart. Nurturing pupils' enjoyment of learning underpins everything that happens here. Pupils told us that 'this school is great because things are fair here,' and that 'we get a chance to learn about lots of things we didn't know.' One younger pupil told us he had written a book about how lucky he was to be at this school, although we were not sure whether this was true, or just a burning ambition!

Leaders' expectations are consistently high. This is reflected in pupils' excellent academic achievements, exemplary behaviour and strong attitudes to learning. Lesson visits showed classrooms to be calm and purposeful, no matter what subject was being taught. Routines are firmly established. Pupils know what is expected of them and work hard as result. They told us that they feel safe in school and free from bullying.

The great majority of parents are overwhelmingly positive about the school. One told us that she felt that staff and pupils were 'super kind', especially to pupils who needed additional support and encouragement to believe in themselves to achieve their best. Our experiences during the inspection endorse this view.

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

This is an outstanding school where governors, leaders and staff are highly ambitious in their work to provide the best for all pupils. This includes pupils from vulnerable groups and those who have particular interests and talents.

The school's curriculum is rich and offers pupils excellent opportunities to learn in a wide range of subjects. Leaders have ensured that teachers have the knowledge and skills required to teach with confidence and passion. Staff are proud to work here. They appreciate the opportunities leaders provide for them to develop their expertise. The impact of this is clear to see in classrooms, where pupils are highly motivated because they enjoy learning and want to succeed.

Developing pupils' mathematical skills and ensuring that pupils are confident readers and writers is fundamental to leaders' vision for the school. This is reflected in pupils' consistently strong outcomes over time in these subjects at the end of key stage 2.

Phonics is taught well. Staff have the expertise and the resources to ensure that most pupils become fluent and growingly confident readers by the time they move into Year 2 and beyond. Curriculum leaders who are responsible for this are 'stealthily relentless' in their work to ensure a consistency of approach across the school. This stretches from early years into key stage 2, where older pupils were very happy to share their enjoyment of books in discussions with us.

Staff also teach mathematics well. Consequently, pupils really do enjoy their mathematics lessons. This includes pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, who are supported appropriately with additional resources and adult help if required. Children in the early years also love working with shapes and numbers due to staff making learning fun. Older pupils' times tables skills are strong because leaders have prioritised this. As a result, pupils relish using their mathematical knowledge to reason and to solve problems.

Much of the good practice evident in teaching mathematics and English is replicated in the way teachers deliver lessons in other subjects. This includes in the early years, where provision is also very strong. Teachers constantly question pupils to check their understanding and to move learning forward. Reminding pupils of prior learning helps them to remember what they already know. This includes in physical education lessons in the early years or Year 3, for instance where pupils were seen to complete warm-up exercises proficiently because of their previous learning.

Leaders recently reviewed the way science is taught, introducing a more practical approach to lessons. Pupils report that science lessons are more enjoyable and engaging as a result. Pupils also enjoy music and the arts at Little Common. Musical performances contribute positively to developing pupils' confidence and well-being. This includes opportunities to perform to audiences both in and out of school, including at national events in London, for instance.

Pupils are ready for their transition to secondary school when it comes. Their personal development is supported well by the wider curriculum, including the school's extra-curricular offer. They know about the potential dangers associated with using the internet. They have a growing understanding of the importance of healthy diets and physical exercise. The school's 'charter', a list of experiences pupils will undertake before leaving the school, supports their understanding of culture and diversity in modern Britain well.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

All staff and those in positions of governance understand their duty to promote the welfare, health and safety of pupils. As a result, the culture to keep pupils safe is strong and underpins all aspects of day-to-day school life.

Staff know pupils well. They are aware of the risks and potential dangers pupils might face, both in and out of school. Leaders ensure that staff are trained well and understand the school's procedures to report concerns, no matter how small.

Pupils told us they feel safe because staff really care and that the school is a safe place to be.

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	114429
Local authority	East Sussex
Inspection number	10122215
Type of school	Primary
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	595
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Nick Wilkinson
Headteacher	Linda Appleby
Website	http://www.littlecommon.e-sussex.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	5 February 2019, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school was last inspected under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 in February 2019. At that time, it was felt that the school may have improved significantly since the school's last inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005 in February 2015, when the overall effectiveness was judged to be good.

Information about this inspection

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

- We held a wide range of meetings during the inspection. These included meetings with the leaders, teaching and support staff, pupils and parents. We met with the chair of the governing body, who was accompanied by three other governors. We also talked to a representative of the local authority on the telephone.
- When considering the quality of the curriculum, we did deep dives in these subjects: reading, mathematics, science, music and physical education. Deep dives included visiting lessons, looking at pupils' work, and talking to leaders,

teachers and pupils about how teaching in these subjects builds on pupils' knowledge over time. We also heard pupils read.

- We assessed the school's culture to keep pupils safe throughout the inspection. A wide range of documentation was considered, including policies, records of governors' meetings and leaders' self-evaluation and development planning. The single central record of checks on the suitability of adults to work with children was scrutinised, along with other records of the school's work to keep pupils safe.

Inspection team

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