

Inspection of a good school: Eastling Primary School

Kettle Hill Road, Eastling, Faversham, Kent ME13 0BA

Inspection date: 20 October 2021

Outcome

Eastling Primary School continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils in this school love learning and playing outside with their friends come rain, shine or wind. They enjoy nothing more than pulling on their wellies and marching onto the field to build, create and explore at lunchtime. The curriculum is enhanced by many opportunities for pupils to visit different places in the school's minibuses, to deepen and widen their experiences. For example, they visit museums, castles and beaches.

Eastling is a place where everyone is kind and friendly. Pupils can be themselves because they feel happy and safe. Older pupils take their responsibilities as monitors, librarians, buddies and prefects really seriously. Pupils care for each other. They know what bullying, including cyber-bullying is, but do not think it happens here. At worst, sometimes pupils use unkind names, but adults sort this out quickly. Behaviour in lessons and at playtimes is good.

Leaders have high expectations and want pupils to achieve the best they can. Reading is prioritised and pupils are introduced to a range of classic texts throughout their time at the school. Topics in a range of subjects are linked effortlessly with the outside environment and the school's rural community and setting.

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

Teachers plan and teach termly topics that inspire and motivate pupils. These topics invariably make good use of the outdoor environment and the local area to bring learning to life. Leaders and teachers think carefully about the experiences they want pupils to have and the attributes they want them to gain.

The national curriculum is covered in full, but more thought could be given to how this is sequenced. The order in which knowledge and skills in different topics are taught has not always been explicitly planned. Therefore, new learning, especially in subjects other than English and mathematics, does not build well on what pupils already know and can do.

Reading definitely comes first at this school. Children in Reception soon learn their letter sounds and how to write them. Most pupils quickly learn to read fluently because phonics teaching is good. The few pupils who find reading more difficult are well supported by adults and have access to reading books that match the sounds they know. Pupils grow to love reading and welcome the choices they are able to make from class readers to classic texts. By the time they leave the school, pupils have the necessary skills to help them read fluently and show good comprehension.

Teachers' subject knowledge is strong, including in mathematics. Teachers ask questions that make pupils think carefully. They also model and demonstrate new things clearly and give pupils time to practise new skills. Parents are pleased with how well their children do at the school. One parent said, 'There is no doubt that my child is thriving at Eastling School, both academically and socially.'

Any additional needs are identified quickly and accurately. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities are often supported to do the same challenging work as their peers, by working with other adults or using different resources.

Leaders and teachers have clear expectations around behaviour. Pupils understand what is expected of them. They know that it is 'good to be green'. Pupils think that the rules are applied fairly. Low-level disruption is rare. Pupils are well-mannered and have good values. Older pupils do not tolerate any type of prejudice.

Impressively, the school has almost got back to pre-pandemic arrangements with clubs, trips and visits. Pupils enjoy swimming lessons and competing against other schools in sports competitions and galas, including one in basketball which took place during the inspection. As one parent commented, 'The outdoor learning opportunities are incredible and so beneficial for the children.'

Governors are rightly proud of the unique characteristics of this school and the opportunities it affords the pupils. However, they are not complacent and they continuously check on what more could be done.

Staff work incredibly well together as a close-knit team. They share the workload between themselves in a supportive way. Staff appreciate the guidance they get from leaders to help manage their work and well-being.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Although the school is small enough for every child and family to be known well by the staff, there is no complacency. There is an understanding that 'anything could happen here'. Therefore, the leaders responsible for safeguarding, staff and relevant governors are fully trained and understand their responsibilities, including when it comes to whistle-blowing.

Leaders recognise that many pupils are living in a protective 'bubble' in this rural village school. Therefore, they ensure that the curriculum covers dangers that pupils may not yet have had the misfortune to encounter, such as cyber-bullying. External visitors such as the police enhance this work.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Pupils often remember the special events or activities that they have attended or tried, but not the important knowledge that underpins them. Leaders should continue to develop the curriculum in subjects other than English and mathematics so that key knowledge is carefully sequenced. This will allow new topics to build clearly on previous learning, enabling pupils to learn and remember more. For this reason, the transitional arrangements have been applied.

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 or outstanding school, because it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on a section 8 inspection. However, if we find some evidence that the school would now receive a higher or lower grade, 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 deem the section 8 inspection as a section 5 inspection immediately.

This is the first section 8 inspection since we judged the school to be good in September 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 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.

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	118336
Local authority	Kent
Inspection number	10200002
Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	98
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Nicola Allen
Headteacher	Melanie Dale
Website	www.eastling.kent.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	13 and 14 September 2016, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The headteacher joined the school since the previous inspection.
- The school does not use any alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with school leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation.
- Inspectors met with the headteacher, the special educational needs coordinator and other teaching staff. The lead inspector met with members of the governing body, including the chair of governors, and held a telephone conversation with a local authority representative.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in reading, mathematics and history. For each deep dive, inspectors met with subject leaders, looked at curriculum plans, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.

- Inspectors also looked at curriculum plans and spoke to leaders about other subjects and the wider curriculum.
- Inspectors spoke to pupils at breaktimes and lunchtime to gather their views about the school. They also considered responses to the staff and parent questionnaires.
- To inspect safeguarding, inspectors met with the leaders responsible for safeguarding and held discussions with teachers, governors and pupils. They also scrutinised the single central record and other safeguarding documentation.

Inspection team

Lee Selby, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Hanna Miller

Her Majesty's Inspector

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