

Inspection of a good school: Sussex Road Community Primary School

Sussex Road, Tonbridge, Kent TN9 2TP

Inspection dates:

23 and 24 November 2021

Outcome

Sussex Road Community Primary School continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Leaders have high aspirations for all pupils. Right from the start in Reception Year there is a focus on developing children's independence. As pupils move up through the school, they mature into self-motivated learners who embody the school's values of being 'responsible, respectful and ready'. Pupils are happy. They thrive and flourish at school.

Leaders provide many opportunities for pupils to develop their interests and skills. Pupils are excited that the wide range of school clubs are restarting after the COVID-19 restrictions. They relish the opportunities to contribute to the wider life of the school by being play leaders, house captains or eco-warriors.

Pupils behave well. They are motivated by the school's reward system for good behaviour or hard work. Staff offer a wide range of appropriate support to any pupils who need help to understand and manage their emotions. Playtimes are cheerful social times. Pupils enjoy playing games and catching up with their friends. They use the school's climbing frames safely and responsibly. Pupils trust adults to help resolve any difficulties or any very occasional incidents of bullying. A pupil explained, 'The staff figure things out. They are really good at it.' Pupils feel safe and well supported.

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

Leaders have ensured that the curriculum is of high quality. It is designed around the school's ethos of 'question, challenge, explore'. Pupils are inspired by the enquiry questions that drive their learning. Leaders have structured subject plans well so that pupils cover the scope of the national curriculum but also learn in a connected and meaningful way.

Across subjects, the key knowledge that pupils should learn, and the order in which they should learn it, is clearly planned out. Teachers and teaching assistants have benefited from well-focused training and support to help them implement these curriculum plans well. Teachers assess pupils' learning routinely during lessons. This means that they

quickly spot when pupils need to go over things or need a little help. Assessment to check what pupils remember longer term is in place in English and mathematics but is less well developed in other subjects.

Leaders prioritise reading. Right from the start in Reception Year children benefit from high-quality reading sessions and regular phonics teaching. This helps them to learn to read fluently and well. Those pupils who need extra help learning to read are quickly identified and given the support they need to catch up. Leaders ensure that disadvantaged pupils have specially chosen books to help build their knowledge and vocabulary of upcoming topics. As pupils move through the school, reading is of central importance to their learning. They use a wide range of books to gather knowledge across subjects. For example, pupils in Year 6 discussed poetry with impressive levels of understanding.

Pupils build secure number skills through a carefully sequenced mathematics curriculum. This helps them to solve a wide range of mathematical problems quickly and accurately. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities benefit from well-matched support so that they experience success. The mathematics curriculum has been strengthened to include more opportunities for pupils to explain their thinking. Consequently, pupils become confident mathematicians who are able to apply their skills to other subject areas.

In Reception Year, children are supported well by staff to build knowledge across different areas of learning. For example, using small blocks to represent key buildings helps children to develop their geographical knowledge of the local area. Then, over time, teachers' clear plans build up prior learning so that by Year 5, pupils are able to apply their knowledge of countries and continents to inform their understanding of time zones. Teachers are currently refining how assessment is used in geography.

Learning is well supported by pupils' good behaviour. In lessons, pupils listen to their teachers and follow instructions well. The school is an orderly environment. Pupils know what is expected of them. They enjoy working in pairs or teams. Pupils explained how their regular forest school work has taught them to work together and solve problems. The curriculum supports pupils' personal development well. They learn about themselves and others so that they are well prepared for life in modern Britain.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Regular training ensures that all staff know how to identify the signs that pupils may be at risk of harm. Staff pass on any concerns quickly. Meticulous records help leaders to spot any emerging patterns. Leaders act swiftly to source relevant external support for vulnerable pupils when required. All appropriate checks are carefully completed to ensure the suitability of staff.

The curriculum provides regular opportunities for pupils to learn how to keep themselves safe, including online. Leaders ensure that pupils know how to seek help if they have any worries. Pupils are confident that staff will listen and respond to any concerns.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Assessment practice is strong in core subjects, enabling staff to adapt plans to meet pupils' needs well. In some other subjects, pupils are not able to retain knowledge learned in previous years. Leaders should implement their plans to ensure that assessment information is used well in all subjects.

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 evidence that a 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 November 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	118286
Local authority	Kent
Inspection number	10200401
Type of school	Primary
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	5 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	447
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Michael Webber
Headteacher	Sarah Bowles
Website	http://www.sussex-road.kent.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	22 and 23 November 2016, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- Interim leaders have been in place for periods since the last inspection. This is because both the headteacher and the deputy headteacher have been on maternity leave. Currently, the senior leadership team comprises of the headteacher, the acting deputy headteacher and the acting assistant headteacher.
- The school does not currently use any alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. The inspector discussed the impact of the pandemic with school leaders and has taken that into account in their evaluation.
- During the inspection, the inspector met regularly with the headteacher and the leadership team. The inspector also met with other school leaders, including the special educational needs coordinator and the safeguarding lead.

- The inspector met with governors, including the chair of the governing body. The inspector also had a telephone conversation with a representative from Kent local authority.
- The inspector conducted deep dives into reading, mathematics and geography. For each deep dive, the inspector 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. The inspector listened to some pupils reading.
- Records associated with safeguarding were reviewed, including the single central record and appointment procedures. The inspector spoke to staff about their safeguarding training and spoke to pupils about the support they receive to help them understand how to keep safe.
- The inspector reviewed responses to the Ofsted Parent View questionnaire and considered an email from a parent.
- Groups of staff met with the inspector to share their views about the school, including on workload and well-being. The inspector completed a tour of the school with pupils and spoke to them on the playground.

Inspection team

Deborah Gordon, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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