

Inspection of a good school: Rowanfield Infant School

Alstone Lane, Cheltenham, Gloucestershire GL51 8HY

Inspection dates: 25 and 26 January 2022

Outcome

Rowanfield Infant School continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Leaders put pupils at the heart of all they do. Consequently, pupils are safe and happy. They enjoy learning and come to school with smiles on their faces.

Leaders have raised expectations of standards and behaviour. They work relentlessly to ensure that pupils continue to catch up, following the national lockdowns caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Pupils take responsibility for their actions. They reflect on any wrong-doing and celebrate success. As a result, pupils learn without disruption. Equally, on the rare occasions that pupils have fall outs with friends, staff deal with them swiftly and effectively.

The curriculum is rich with opportunities and experiences to widen pupils' understanding. For example, on the day of the inspection Year 1 pupils were learning about animals in science with living examples of scorpions, snakes and other creatures. Staff provide a variety of extra-curricular activities, such as sewing, gardening and craft work, as well as sports.

Staff make every effort to know families well. Parents come to coffee mornings in school, where they can share their delights and concerns. This builds on the vital contact made during the COVID-19 pandemic.

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

The headteacher is a strong, passionate, strategic leader. Staff see themselves as a team which provides capacity and commitment to the school's mantra of the four Ds: 'Dream, Drive, Duty, Dazzle'. Every member of staff feels valued. Trust leaders challenge effectively and have supported the school to get to this point.

Reading is an important part of the school's work. The new library is central, physically and educationally. Pupils use it well. Children learn phonics from the outset. They are

learning sounds and blending them into words quickly. When children in the Reception Year struggle, there is immediate support to help them catch up. Teachers read to pupils, which engages and stimulates them. Pupils read for pleasure within the library and during reading lessons, as well as at home. Staff guide pupils carefully so that the books match the sounds they know. However, pupils' development of writing related the phonics they have learned is not as strong. Pupils from Reception to Year 2 do not have the same chances to write as they do to read and talk. Therefore, it is harder for staff to monitor pupils' progress in the writing curriculum.

Leaders have made successful changes to the mathematics curriculum. Children develop an understanding of number sequence and placement in Reception. They respond enthusiastically and participate in songs and rhymes. These help them to remember their learning. Pupils in Years 1 and 2 consider problem-solving and reasoning while developing their fluency in calculations. This allows pupils to make their next steps to key stage 2 more easily.

Leaders are developing subject curriculums successfully by evaluating what knowledge pupils are retaining over time. There is, in most cases, an understanding of how knowledge develops as pupils progress. However, in some subjects there is a lack of clarity about which concepts will deepen pupils' learning. Equally, there are some subject curriculums that do not include Reception. Therefore, at times, teachers cannot ensure that learning provides the specific knowledge that pupils need.

Staff respond sensitively to adjustments required for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Similarly, leaders have thought carefully about what helps disadvantaged pupils succeed. Sometimes this is a breakfast or a set of clean clothes. Other times, it might be equipment or extra support in reading. Whatever it is, leaders make sure that it is at the forefront of staff thinking every day.

Several pupils arrive at school without the ability to speak clearly. In addition, there is an increasing proportion of pupils joining the school who speak English as an additional language. As a result, whether in Reception or other year groups, some pupils do not pronounce words phonetically. Every member of staff is vigilant in encouraging talk and modelling correct pronunciation. Pupils in need of the most help receive expert support.

When children arrive in Reception, they settle into routines quickly. They show consideration to each other and share and take turns appropriately. These attitudes continue throughout school. Pupils are polite and courteous to each other. Staff model respectful communication. This has a positive impact on the day-to-day life of the school.

Leaders think carefully about how to enrich pupils' understanding of the wider world. They embrace the nationalities and cultures of pupils and celebrate them. Local and national employees visit to explain their careers and how they achieved their goals. Personal, social and health education concentrates on aspects of healthy living and emphasises the importance of pupils having time for personal reflection.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Many pupils within the school are highly vulnerable. The safeguarding leaders are tenacious in ensuring that pupils are safe. They provide effective care to ensure pupils' welfare and well-being allow them to come to school and learn. They work closely with families, as well as pupils. When necessary, they liaise with agencies, such as social services and the local authority, to protect the most vulnerable.

Leaders ensure that school recruitment checks are done effectively. Staff receive regular training and up-to-date messages about concerns, such as county lines and peer-on-peer abuse.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Subject leaders do not consider carefully enough which are the crucial concepts that pupils need to learn. Therefore, teaching does not always build on pupils' knowledge from Reception as effectively as it could. Curriculum planning needs to identify the key ideas to be emphasised so that pupils deepen their knowledge over time, including for disadvantaged pupils and those pupils with SEND.
- Phonics is taught effectively but pupils do not demonstrate their phonics knowledge often enough in their writing. As a result, writing is not as effective as reading. Teachers need to provide more opportunities for pupils to develop their writing skills.

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 predecessor school, Rowanfield Infant School, to be good in May 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	144898
Local authority	Gloucestershire
Inspection number	10212154
Type of school	Infant
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	4 to 7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	238
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Stuart Allan
Headteacher	Shona Riddell
Website	www.rowanfieldinfant.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- The school joined the Gloucester Learning Alliance in September 2017.
- The headteacher was appointed in September 2020.
- The school does not use any alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

The inspector carried out this inspection under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

- This was the first routine inspection the school had received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. The inspector discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and has taken that into account in her evaluation of the school.
- The inspector met with the headteacher, other senior leaders and staff, the trust's deputy chief executive officer and other members of the trust's school improvement team and two trustees.
- The inspector carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics and history. For each deep dive, the inspector discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers,

spoke to some pupils about their learning, listened to pupils read and looked at samples of pupils' work.

- Inspectors also spoke to leaders about the curriculum in some other subjects.
- The inspector looked at recruitment practices and checks. In addition, the inspector spoke with the designated safeguarding lead. The inspector spoke with staff about their training in safeguarding and to pupils.
- The inspector spoke with the special educational needs coordinator for the school and the trust.
- The inspector took account of responses to Ofsted's online survey, Ofsted Parent View, including free-text responses, and the staff survey.

Inspection team

Kathy Maddocks, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

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