

Inspection of Featherby Junior School

Chilham Road, Gillingham Kent ME8 6BT

Inspection dates: 7 and 8 December 2021

Overall effectiveness

Inadequate

The quality of education

Requires improvement

Behaviour and attitudes

Good

Personal development

Good

Leadership and management

Inadequate

Previous inspection grade

Not previously inspected under section 5
of the Education Act 2005

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils enjoy coming to this school. They respect their teachers and they like being with their friends. Pupils feel safe at school. However, leaders do not always fully understand or acknowledge the potential risks that pupils might face. This means that leaders do not always take the right actions to protect pupils from these risks.

Staff have high expectations because leaders are ambitious about what pupils will learn at school. Despite this, some pupils cannot read well enough to access the school's full curriculum offer.

Pupils say that behaviour at the school has improved considerably under the current headteacher's leadership. Classrooms are calm and purposeful. Pupils work very well together, sharing ideas and supporting each other in their learning. Pupils told inspectors that they were confident that leaders address bullying swiftly and effectively.

The majority of parents are positive about the school. They say that the school has improved over recent years and describe the support that they have received during the COVID-19 pandemic as being 'second to none'.

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

School leaders are working effectively with other leaders from within the trust to develop the school's curriculum. As a result, pupils are beginning to learn and remember more across a wide range of subjects. Leaders have well-established plans in place to continue to develop teachers' subject knowledge across the curriculum so that teaching becomes more effective over time. Leaders also know that they need to ensure that staff fully understand the specific knowledge that pupils must learn in each subject. This will help staff to focus their teaching, particularly for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, to ensure that all pupils make good progress through the curriculum.

A new mathematics curriculum was introduced in September 2021. Staff have had additional training so that they know how to teach mathematics effectively. Staff have identified the gaps in mathematical knowledge that pupils developed because of the pandemic and are addressing these effectively within lessons. Additional support is also available for those pupils who need it.

Leaders are working to advance teachers' understanding of how to teach reading effectively. Pupils across the school are developing positive attitudes towards reading and really enjoy the books that they read in class and independently. Older pupils, in particular, enjoy their reading lessons. They benefit from exposure to a wide range of ambitious texts that help them to develop their vocabulary and deepen their thinking. Despite this, the reading curriculum is still not strong enough to ensure that all pupils develop reading fluency and comprehension appropriate to their age. There are pupils at the school who have struggled to learn to read and have not had

the right support to catch up over time. Not all staff are as skilled at delivering the school's programme to teach pupils to read as they should be. Nor do staff have access to all of the resources they require to deliver a sufficiently sequenced reading curriculum, particularly for those pupils who are struggling to read.

Leaders have put in place an effective curriculum for personal, social and health education, including relationships and sex education. Pupils really value these lessons and the opportunities that they provide to discuss and share any worries they might have. There is also a clear programme for pupils' wider personal development which is underpinned by the school values of unity, trust, responsibility, respect, resilience and aspiration. Pupils demonstrate both maturity and kindness in their thinking and actions. They value the fact that others will be different to them and hold different views. They have real respect for each other and for their whole school community. Pupils told inspectors that they would not tolerate any form of discrimination at their school.

Leaders have established clear expectations for pupils' behaviour and conduct. Teachers and pupils understand the systems that are in place to promote positive attitudes to school and feel that they are fair and effective. As a result, pupils have positive attitudes towards their learning and staff feel that they are supported well by leaders in managing behaviour.

Senior leaders are committed to the school. They have brought about some real improvement since their appointment in 2018. However, they have relied too heavily on external verification of the safeguarding arrangements at the school. This means that they are not checking carefully enough that those leaders with additional responsibilities for safeguarding understand their roles or are performing them effectively. Additionally, those responsible for governance are not aware of weaknesses in the school's provision to safeguard pupils.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are not effective.

Key leaders responsible for safeguarding do not demonstrate a clear understanding of their roles. For example, safeguarding leaders do not always consider all the information known by the school in their assessments of risk. As a result, when external safeguarding partners request information from the school, safeguarding leaders are too quick to say that the school has no concerns about pupils. This has been the case even when the school did hold information that should have highlighted possible concerns. Furthermore, leaders of safeguarding sometimes perceive safeguarding concerns as primarily relating to matters outside of school and consider that it should be parents who address them. This means that they are not ensuring that all pupils get the help that they need.

Record-keeping for safeguarding is weak. In some instances, records are not detailed enough to evidence what has happened in response to a safeguarding concern. Additionally, sometimes, information shared with external safeguarding

partners is brief and not sufficiently clear to communicate exactly what the key concerns are.

Leaders are not able to evidence effectively how the impact of risk for pupils is being minimised. Leaders', including those in positions of governance, oversight of safeguarding is not effective. They are not sufficiently aware that the day-to-day safeguarding work in the school is not good enough.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Leaders have not ensured that those designated to lead safeguarding are knowledgeable and effective in their safeguarding roles. This means that designated safeguarding leads do not recognise potential risks that pupils face, nor ensure that pupils get the right help that they need. Leaders must ensure that the school's designated safeguarding leads are knowledgeable and effective in their roles so they can recognise risk and take robust action to keep pupils safe.
- Safeguarding records are not sufficiently clear or detailed to enable effective safeguarding work to take place. Some information about safeguarding is not contained within the safeguarding record-keeping system. For example, some information that pertained to safeguarding was kept within attendance logs. Leaders must ensure that safeguarding records are sufficiently detailed and clear, and that all safeguarding information is added to pupils' safeguarding records so that it can be collated, assessed and shared with external partners in an appropriate and timely way.
- Leaders have not maintained effective oversight of safeguarding arrangements in the school. There are gaps between what senior leaders think is happening in respect of safeguarding and what is actually the case. For example, leaders have adopted a flow chart for managing inappropriate sexual behaviours. However, this is not being utilised when it is appropriate to do so. Leaders must ensure that they check the quality of safeguarding practice in the school on an ongoing basis to ensure that safeguarding practice is highly effective and robust, and that school policy and procedure are consistently followed.
- Despite some strengths, the school's programme to teach pupils to read is not yet having the impact it needs. Support for weaker readers is not strong enough. Not all staff are sufficiently expert in helping pupils to read, nor do they have access to sufficient resources to implement the school's intended reading curriculum. Leaders need to address these shortcomings as a matter of urgency. This will mean that all pupils get the support that they need to become fluent readers and be able to access the school's wider curriculum with confidence.

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	144969
Local authority	Medway
Inspection number	10203170
Type of school	Junior
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	7 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	342
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Tiffany Beck
Headteacher	Amy Eccles
Website	www.featherby-jun.medway.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The headteacher started working at the school in September 2018.
- The executive headteacher started working at the school in March 2018.
- The school is currently without a permanent special educational needs coordinator (SENCo). There is an interim SENCo, who is being supported by the headteacher. The headteacher is a qualified SENCo.
- The school is not currently using alternative provision.
- The school provides and manages a breakfast and after-school club.

Information about this inspection

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

In accordance with section 44(2) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires significant improvement, because it is performing significantly less well than it might in all the circumstances reasonably be expected to perform.

- 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 chief executive officer of the multi-academy trust, the executive headteacher, the headteacher and other members of the leadership team. Inspectors met with those responsible for governance. The lead inspector also spoke to a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, mathematics, science 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. For the English deep dive, the lead inspector listened to pupils reading. Inspectors also spoke to leaders about curriculum planning across the foundation subjects.
- To inspect safeguarding, inspectors checked the single central record, and reviewed safeguarding records and records of leaders' quality assurance of safeguarding practices. Inspectors also spoke to leaders, staff, pupils and the local authority about different aspects of safeguarding.
- Inspectors reviewed a range of documentation, including leaders' self-evaluation of the school and school improvement plans.
- Inspectors talked to pupils about their learning, what behaviour is like at the school and whether they felt safe at school.
- Inspectors reviewed staff and parent surveys and spoke to parents at the gate on the morning of day one of the inspection.

Inspection team

Alice Roberts, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Jo Lakey

Ofsted Inspector

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Ofsted Inspector

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