

Inspection of an outstanding school: Cliffdale Primary Academy

Battenburg Avenue, North End, Portsmouth, Hampshire PO2 0SN

Inspection dates:

8 and 9 February 2022

Outcome

Cliffdale Primary Academy continues to be an outstanding school.

What is it like to attend this school?

The school's values of 'inspire engagement, build relationships, increase communication, promote independence and encourage resilience' are truly at the heart of everything the school does. The colourful triangles that represent these values can be seen all around the school, and pupils try their very best to live up to them.

Pupils love their school. Their engagement and sheer enjoyment in learning are wonderful to see. Pupils experience invaluable, exciting opportunities to learn about the world around them. Staff enable pupils to be as fully prepared for their future lives as possible. Parents and carers, and, wherever possible, pupils are included in all decisions about the future at the earliest possible stage.

The school's successful 'bubble behaviour ethos' illustrates clearly the consistent approach adopted throughout the multi-academy trust. This positive, proactive and preventative approach works very well. All staff have high expectations of pupils' behaviour. Staff are highly skilled and know pupils extremely well. Routines are consistently followed, reducing anxiety for pupils, and allowing them to understand what is expected of them. Consequently, pupils behave exceptionally well and the school is a very calm place to learn.

The non-judgemental, supportive community that leaders strive for makes this school a warm, nurturing, inclusive environment of which everyone is rightly proud.

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

Pupils are exceptionally well prepared for the next stage of their education. They follow individual, appropriately tailored curriculums. Their key skills targets are based on their education, health and care (EHC) plan outcomes, with the school's values fittingly woven through. These targets ensure that pupils make excellent progress towards longer term outcomes by breaking these outcomes down into sensible smaller steps. Targets are reviewed regularly and adapted as needed, which ensures that they remain ambitious.

Alongside these key skills targets, the carefully sequenced topic curriculum provides pupils with a broad range of interesting and motivating experiences from which they successfully learn about the world around them.

For those pupils working at the highest academic levels, discrete, subject-specific lessons focus on national curriculum knowledge and skills. This is coherently sequenced and organised so that their prior knowledge is built on successfully. Staff ensure that these pupils rightly continue to focus on essential key skills alongside the national curriculum subject. As a result of leaders' careful planning and teachers' expert subject knowledge, all elements of pupils' individual curriculums work together exceptionally well.

Teachers and teaching assistants have an impressive level of in-depth knowledge about the different ways in which pupils in their class learn. Staff adapt teaching activities skilfully to teach pupils with vastly different learning needs successfully.

Staff are adept at promoting pupils' communication. Pupils successfully learn to read or recognise symbols or words at a level that is appropriate for them, allowing them to access the world around them.

Particularly well-organised staff and classrooms ensure that pupils can be as independent as possible. The wealth of readily available, appropriate sensory equipment helps pupils learn to self-regulate their emotions effectively. For pupils who require additional help to manage their own behaviour well, staff use thoughtfully designed strategies to teach them successfully how to do this.

Within school, opportunities such as team days and friendship week allow pupils to develop essential social communication skills. Pupils benefit from the vast range of opportunities in the wider community, such as horse-riding, archery and visits to the farm, which form a regular part of their curriculum offer. Even the youngest children in early years benefit from a range of opportunities, including swimming and trips to the café. For those pupils who are not yet able to access the community safely, carefully planned strategies enable them to progress successfully through the small steps leading to this ambitious aim. Leaders think creatively to ensure that pupils are provided with a wealth of engaging opportunities that allow them to be included in things that they might otherwise find very difficult to access, such as a week-long magical Santa grotto in school. Pupils and their families benefit hugely from leaders' drive and determination to create a supportive, inclusive community. Consequently, pupils' opportunities and horizons are broadened.

Leaders have recently introduced several well-received strategies designed to reduce workload and promote the well-being of staff. Leaders' mantra of 'quality versus quantity' has resulted in streamlined ways of working, which staff fully appreciate.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Staff get to know and understand pupils quickly and exceptionally well. This, alongside high-quality training, allows staff to notice any small signs that something may not be right, especially when pupils are unable to communicate this themselves.

Leaders have developed very strong working relationships with support agencies. When necessary, leaders chase up referrals and requests for support with tenacity, so that pupils and families receive useful help and support quickly when needed.

School and trust leaders have excellent oversight of the robust systems in place that ensure that any adults working in the school are safe to be there.

Background

When we have judged a school to be outstanding, we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains outstanding. 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 a section 5 inspection immediately.

This is the first section 8 inspection since we judged the school to be outstanding 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	139967
Local authority	Portsmouth
Inspection number	10200386
Type of school	Special school
School category	Academy special sponsor led
Age range of pupils	2 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	204
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Mark Mitchell
Principal	Nicola Payne
Website	www.cliffdaleprimaryacademy.info
Date of previous inspection	17 and 18 November 2016, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- All pupils who attend the school or nursery have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). The school caters for pupils with complex learning difficulties. Over 80% of pupils have autism spectrum disorder and severe learning difficulties.
- The school has provision for two-year-olds identified with SEND who gain their EHC plan while in the nursery. Two and a half years ago, the school amalgamated with the children's centre next door. This site is now where the youngest children learn.
- The school has grown significantly since the previous inspection, almost doubling in size.
- Since the previous inspection, the school leadership team has changed. Leaders, including the principal, while not new to the school, took up their current posts in September 2021.

Information about this inspection

This was the first routine inspection the school had received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders, and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.

- Inspectors met with the principal, the vice-principal, two assistant principals, the chief executive, governors, members of the board of trustees and members of the academy governing body. Inspectors also met with middle leaders, the human resources lead and the chief finance and operations officer for the trust.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these areas: communication, sensory and physical development, and social, emotional and mental health. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, observed pupils and looked at evidence of learning. Where possible, inspectors spoke to pupils about their learning, with staff members helping pupils to communicate effectively.
- Inspectors also heard pupils read, visited additional lessons and discussed pupils' transition to the next phase of education with leaders.
- To inspect safeguarding, inspectors met with leaders, including the designated safeguarding lead, spoke to staff and governors, and scrutinised record-keeping.
- Inspectors also observed pupils at lunchtime in the hall and in the playground.

Inspection team

Maxine McDonald-Taylor, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Gary Tostevin

Ofsted Inspector

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for children looked after, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

This publication is available at <http://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/>.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates:
<http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.gov.uk/ofsted

© Crown copyright 2022