

Inspection of Richard de Clare Community Academy

Parsonage Street, Halstead, Essex CO9 2JT

Inspection dates: 15 and 16 March 2022

Overall effectiveness	Good
The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Good
Early years provision	Requires improvement
Previous inspection grade	Inadequate

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils enjoy attending Richard de Clare. They are clear about how changes over the last two years have made their school a better place. Pupils describe it as 'brilliant'. School staff have consistent expectations of what pupils can achieve and how they should behave. As a result, pupils work hard and there is little poor behaviour.

Pupils learn about a wide range of topics. They are able to build their learning on what has come before. They particularly enjoy reading non-fiction books linked to their geography and history topics.

There are many clubs, including running, multi-skills and knitting. Pupils also benefit from a number of trips out and visitors to the school. They are polite and considerate of others. Pupils work together to raise money and understand the needs of others, championing events such as Red Nose Day and Down's Syndrome Awareness Day.

There is a warm relationship between staff and the pupils in their care. Where there is any unkind behaviour, staff sort it out quickly. Pupils say that there is no longer any bullying.

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

Over the last few years, there have been many changes to the curriculum, staffing and leadership. These changes are now embedded, which means that pupils at Richard de Clare are now experiencing a greater level of stability in staffing, and a good-quality education overall.

The curriculum is well planned and sequenced. This helps pupils to build new learning well on what has come before. There are some subjects, such as Spanish, where pupils have gaps from a lack of previous teaching. Teachers are now helping them make good progress.

In English and mathematics, pupils achieve well. Pupils write at length, with detail and interest. Teachers help pupils visualise their mathematics learning using practical equipment, for example in Year 6 learning about volume.

Pupils learn to read quickly because of the consistent approach in place. Anyone who is at risk of falling behind receives effective extra help in lessons or additional phonics teaching. The books pupils read are well matched to the sounds they know, and this motivates them to read more.

Leaders have invested in a long-term plan to improve the quality of the learning environment across the school. For example, the library/atrium redecoration has increased and improved the reading opportunities, especially for older pupils in Years

4 to 6. Leaders have plans underway to update the rest of the site so spaces can be fully effective in supporting high-quality learning.

Children in Nursery make a strong start to their education due to the warm and welcoming environment and staff expertise. They have lots of opportunities for age-appropriate play, and also to develop mark-making and early understanding of sounds.

However, the Reception provision does not support children's learning as well as in Nursery. Children learn to read well, practising daily, but opportunities to develop early writing skills are more limited. Teachers have recently introduced more opportunities for them to practice writing their sounds and numbers, but children are not yet doing enough of this. Additionally, the outside space does not have the same high-quality resources as in the Nursery in order to encourage learning.

The needs of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are identified, and staff use detailed plans to ensure that pupils get the right support. A small proportion of parents remain concerned about the provision for their children. Leaders know there is more to do to work with some parents to ensure that they are involved in the planning for their children so that they understand and are confident in how the provision for their children is appropriate and effective.

Behaviour in classes is focused and calm. Pupils understand the behaviour code and are motivated by the regular certificates and awards. They are encouraged to be independent and are considerate of each other. They demonstrate the positive values they are taught about. Pupils are taught about the importance of respect, for example when they learn about different cultures.

The leadership of the school is now secure. A permanent headteacher is in place, ably supported by colleagues from the multi-academy trust to help further improve the school. Staff are very positive about the training and development that they have received. This has resulted in consistent approaches to teaching and behaviour. Teachers, including those early on in their career, feel well supported.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Safeguarding children is held as high priority. Leaders and staff know the children well. They ensure that any concerns are followed through comprehensively. Regular training means that staff are kept up to date with their understanding of how to keep children safe.

Leaders have improved the site security. They make sure that pupils know how to keep themselves safe when out and about and online.

The trustees and intervention board check that leaders are implementing safeguarding policies to a high standard.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Teachers do not provide children in Reception sufficient opportunities to practise their learning. As a result, children in Reception are not making progress across aspects of the curriculum as well as they should be, most notably in early writing and number skills. The use of the outdoor area is also underdeveloped. Leaders need to ensure that all children have more opportunities to practice key skills in their play and other activities, both in the indoor and outdoor environment.
- Despite many strengths in the provision for pupils with SEND, some parents remained concerned about the quality of support for their children's learning and behaviour. Leaders should continue to work with parents to co-produce support for pupils so that parents have confidence and understanding in the provision being put in place for pupils.

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	143204
Local authority	Essex
Inspection number	10200130
Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	353
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Keith Mogford
Headteacher	Lucinda Bellett
Website	www.richarddeclare.com
Dates of previous inspection	23 and 24 June 2021, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school joined the Bridge Academy Trust in April 2021. It was previously part of the North Essex Multi-Academy Trust.
- The last full inspection was in June 2019, when the school was deemed to be inadequate. Since then, there have been two monitoring inspections, plus two other visits from inspectors during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Since just after the last full inspection, the school has had an independent 'intervention' board. Two of the three members of this have remained on the trust intervention board under the new multi-academy trust. Plans are in place to replace this group with a local governing body.
- The school operates over two sites, split by a public footpath. Currently, the smaller section on the far side of the path is occupied by Nursery, Reception and Year 1. All children access the main school site for assemblies, physical education and lunch.
- At the time of the inspection, the head of school (headteacher as of April 2022) was being supported part-time by an executive headteacher.

There is a separately run, registered and inspected, breakfast, after-school and holiday club that operates on the school site.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this inspection under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We deemed the inspection a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

In accordance with section 13(4) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that the school no longer requires special measures.

- Inspectors discussed any continued impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives into: reading, mathematics, modern foreign languages, physical education and geography. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors also spoke to pupils and staff about the curriculum in some other subjects and looked at samples of work.
- To inspect safeguarding, inspectors scrutinised the single central record and a sample of safeguarding records. They spoke to staff, parents and pupils.
- Inspectors met with the head of school, the executive headteacher and a wide range of other staff. They met with the chief executive officer, the trust primary director of education and the chair of the trust intervention board.
- Inspectors spent time observing playtimes.
- Inspectors considered the 49 responses to the parents' survey and the 25 responses to the staff's survey.

Inspection team

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