

Inspection of a good school: Ridgmont Lower School

High Street, Ridgmont, Bedford, Bedfordshire MK43 0TS

Inspection dates:

23 March 2022

Outcome

There has been no change to this school's overall judgement of good as a result of this initial (section 8) inspection. However, the evidence gathered suggests that the inspection grade might not be as high if a full inspection were carried out now. The next inspection will therefore be a full (section 5) inspection.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils at Ridgmont Lower School are proud of their school. They enjoy being part of a close school family, where everyone cares for each other. They are keen to make new pupils welcome.

The school is calm and orderly. Pupils know that school staff expect everyone to behave considerately and safely. Any instances of misbehaviour are not significant. Pupils work hard and do their best.

Pupils say that bullying hardly ever happens. Pupils trust staff to deal with it if it does. Pupils feel safe at school. They feel they have lots of adults they could talk to if they have a problem.

Pupils respect each other. They treat each other with kindness. They make every effort to help all pupils feel they belong, whatever their differences.

Pupils appreciate the varied things there are to do. They look forward to school assemblies where they learn about what is happening in the world. Pupils enjoy the wide range of lessons they receive. However, pupils are not always being well supported to access the highest quality curriculum, including when they first learn to read.

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

Leaders have introduced a new phonics programme, but they are not checking how well it is being implemented. Staff are not all confident to deliver the chosen programme. They are often not delivering it appropriately and are using a mismatch of different reading programmes. Staff are not spotting when some pupils are ready to move on in their reading more rapidly. Leaders do not know whether staff have sufficient knowledge and

training to deliver this programme appropriately and effectively. Pupils do enjoy reading. Staff share a wide range of books with their classes, starting in the early years. Older pupils particularly enjoyed true stories about remarkable animals.

Leaders are in the early stages of redesigning their curriculum, including in English and mathematics. They have decided on the broad topics that they want teachers to teach. Currently, planning does not identify all of the specific knowledge and vocabulary that teachers need to ensure is covered within this curriculum. Senior and subject leaders' monitoring of how well pupils are faring in the curriculum is in its early stages of development. Leaders do not know exactly whether teachers are covering all of the content, as intended.

Despite these weaknesses in curriculum planning and monitoring, pupils enjoy the activities that teachers provide. Many teachers are adept at designing learning activities which interest pupils. They think carefully about the best ways of getting tricky concepts across, such as allowing younger pupils to experiment with scales to learn about weight. This includes high-quality in-class support for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND).

Staff ensure that behaviour in lessons is good so pupils can learn well. Pupils live up to staff's high expectations of them, and play nicely together at breaks and lunchtimes. This positive learning environment extends into the early years, where children settle quickly, are happy and kind to each other. Children and pupils are confident and kind.

Leaders prioritise pupils' personal development. Pupils across the school are taught how to keep themselves healthy through diet and exercise. Leaders ensure that pupils learn about how to look after their emotional and mental health. They learn how to contribute to their school and local communities, such as through writing to residents in a local care home. Pupils are respectful and confident when expressing their opinions.

Governors know the school well. They are aware of where improvements are needed. They are working closely with the local authority on the areas identified on school improvement plans. While the actions in these plans are appropriate, the detail about how and when leaders will bring about improvements lacks precision.

In discussion with the headteacher, the inspectors agreed that early reading, the development of the curriculum and the development of leadership may usefully serve as a focus for the next inspection.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Staff take their safeguarding responsibilities seriously. They receive regular training and understand the risks pupils may face. They know what to do if they are worried about a pupil.

Leaders quickly ensure vulnerable pupils get the help they need. They keep detailed records to make sure concerns are promptly followed up. They work with other agencies to keep pupils safe. Leaders make sure that only suitable people get to work or volunteer in the school.

Pupils learn how to keep themselves safe, including online.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The curriculum does not lay out the specifics that pupils are expected to learn. Leaders' monitoring is in its early stages. Leaders do not know exactly what pupils are covering in each subject, and how well pupils are faring in the curriculum. Leaders should improve the planning and monitoring of this curriculum, so that there is a mutual understanding between staff about what pupils should learn, and how well they are learning.
- Leaders are not checking how well reading is being taught. Staff are not all confident to deliver the new phonics programme and are not maintaining a fidelity to the school's chosen programme. Leaders do not know whether staff have sufficient knowledge and training to deliver this programme appropriately and effectively. Leaders should act to improve staff training and monitoring systems to ensure that pupils are receiving the best support to develop their early reading skills.
- Leaders' improvement planning lacks specificity. Plans do not set out precisely what should be achieved by when and by whom. These plans do not provide governors with sufficient scope to be able to hold leaders to account for timely improvements in the school. Leaders need to improve the quality of this planning so that governors and leaders have a mutual and precise understanding about how priorities are going to be addressed.

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 second section 8 inspection since we judged the school to be good on 21 February 2017.

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	109476
Local authority	Central Bedfordshire
Inspection number	10211434
Type of school	First
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	3 to 9
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	39
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Christine Sweetnam
Headteacher	Allison Jakes
Website	www.ridgmont-lower.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	21 February 2017, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The headteacher has worked at the school since 2001 undertaking various roles. She became headteacher in September 2019.
- The school does not use any alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

- This was the first routine inspection the school 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 headteacher, subject leaders, staff and pupils.
- The lead inspector held discussions with two representatives of the governing body, including the chair of governors.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics and science. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, staff and pupils, visited a sample of lessons and looked at samples of pupils' work. The lead inspector listened to pupils from Years 1 to 3 read to an adult.

- Inspectors scrutinised school documentation, including school development plans and governing body minutes.
- Safeguarding records were scrutinised by inspectors, including the single central record of pre-employment checks, and the school's log of safeguarding incidents. A meeting was held with the designated safeguarding leader.
- Inspectors considered 13 responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View. An inspector also spoke to parents and carers as they arrived at school in the morning with their children. Inspectors also considered 17 responses to Ofsted's pupil online survey and nine responses to the Ofsted staff survey.

Inspection team

Judith Sumner, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

James Chester

Her Majesty's 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