

Inspection of a good school: Sitwell Junior School

Sitwell Junior School, Grange Road, Rotherham, South Yorkshire S60 3LA

Inspection dates: 11 and 12 May 2022

Outcome

Sitwell Junior School continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Leaders have ensured that there is a positive and happy atmosphere in the school. Pupils are kind and polite to each other. Teachers expect all pupils to do their best in whatever they do. Teachers are warm and encouraging to pupils, while insisting on high standards. Pupils come inside after breaktime quickly and quietly. They are keen to learn. Pupils are rightly proud of their written work that is presented well and shows the care that they give to their handwriting.

Pupils enjoy their lessons because teachers help make their work interesting and achievable. Pupils also enjoy all the other opportunities that they get through the many and varied clubs that are on offer. From football to knitting, there is something for everyone.

Staff are quick to help if pupils are having any problems. Staff are always around to talk to. As one pupil said, 'there are lots of adults on the ground'. Staff take all problems seriously and sort out small issues straight away. This means bullying and unkind behaviour hardly ever happen.

Pupils care about each other. They enjoy learning about the differences in the community and know that it is important to celebrate diversity. Pupils learn about important concepts such as charity and how this can help all kinds of different people. Pupils have a very good understanding of different religions and beliefs and why they should respect the opinions of others.

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

Leaders have designed a well-considered curriculum. They have made sure that what pupils are taught in one year is used in following years so pupils remember it. For example, in Spanish, pupils learn about basic weather phrases in Year 3. They then use these to describe what the weather is like where they live in Year 5. Pupils continue to add more detail to their understanding in subjects as they progress through the school.

In most cases, leaders have planned clear final outcomes for pupils to work towards. Teachers then break down what pupils need to be successful in this outcome. Pupils are confident to present what they know to their classmates. However, sometimes these outcomes are not as clearly planned. Teachers can put too much content into some sessions. In these sessions, teachers do not break expected knowledge into smaller parts, and pupils' working memory is overloaded.

Leaders have planned opportunities for pupils to practise what they have been taught. Teachers use these opportunities to check what pupils know and what they can do. Pupils get better at important aspects of their work such as spelling or comparing fractions. As one pupil said, 'Doing it a lot helps to get it in my head.'

The teaching of spelling is a real strength of the school. Teachers are skilled in breaking down words for pupils to remember so that they can spell more and more difficult words. Leaders have made sure that teachers focus on the sounds that are in words. Through this method, pupils continue to practise their phonics. Pupils who are still at the early stages of their reading get effective support. They have quick and precise phonics catch-up sessions. They read books that contain the sounds that they know. This helps them continue to enjoy reading and feel confident in it.

Teachers read a variety of books to pupils and pick out interesting and challenging words. Pupils enjoy listening to stories because teachers make them exciting by putting on voices for characters and stopping at cliffhangers. Teachers select books for pupils to read themselves that help them learn new words and stories.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are supported very well across the school. Teachers make changes to what they are doing to enable pupils to be successful in their work. Teachers and teaching assistants use resources effectively to support pupils' understanding. In mathematics, staff use visual representations of numbers to help pupils in the early stages of mathematics count and order numbers confidently.

Leaders are considerate of what staff need. They make sure that new ideas are discussed and staff get time to put them into practice. Leaders train staff well so that everyone is clear on what needs to be done. Teachers and teaching assistants have a good understanding of their craft and deliver lessons with enthusiasm.

Governors are keen to make a difference and check on what is happening in school. However, the scheme of delegation that sets out what trustees and local governors should do is not clear. Some of what governors do is not strategic and not helping them understand the quality of education in the school.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders have ensured that there continues to be a strong culture of safeguarding in the school. Staff are well trained and leaders regularly update and refresh training to keep it

at the forefront of everyone's minds. Leaders keep comprehensive records of all incidents. All staff know what to do if they notice something that could be of concern. There is a strong pastoral team that works with children and families to support them and passes on information to external agencies when needed.

Leaders deal with all incidents of problematic or worrying behaviour. This includes inappropriate language or physical contact from pupils. Because this is dealt with so well, pupils feel confident to report even the smallest concerns and know they will be dealt with.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In some subjects, teachers plan sequences of learning that do not break down the composite outcome into component parts. Pupils are sometimes given too much content to try and learn in one lesson. Leaders should clarify what pupils are building towards in each sequence of learning. Teachers should then take care to plan out the small steps needed to get there so that pupils can confidently build on their prior learning and acquire new knowledge, without overloading their working memory.
- The scheme of delegation that sets out trustees' and local governors' roles and responsibilities is not sufficiently clear. Governors carry out tasks that are too operational and do not give them effective information about the quality of education in the school. Trustees should ensure the scheme of delegation states with more precision each aspect of the governance structure and how responsibilities are communicated with each other. Governors should carry out activities that help them evaluate the effectiveness of the quality of education in the school from a strategic perspective. New governors should be trained and guided in how to do this.

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 predecessor school of the same name to be good in March 2013.

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	141060
Local authority	Rotherham
Inspection number	10228089
Type of school	Junior
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	7 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	303
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Paul Jagger
Headteacher	Jennifer Dawson
Website	www.sitwelljunior.uk
Date of previous inspection	3 May 2017, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The headteacher was previously the head of school. She took up the substantive role of headteacher in 2018.
- The school does not use any alternative provision.
- The school is part of the Inspire Multi-Academy Trust (MAT).

Information about this inspection

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. The inspector discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and has taken that into account in his evaluation of the school.
- The inspector met with the headteacher, deputy headteacher and the two assistant headteachers about their educational vision for the school. He met with two local governors who are also trustees and the chief executive officer (CEO) of Inspire MAT about their roles in overseeing and supporting the work of leaders.
- The inspector carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, English and languages (Spanish). 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 and looked at samples of pupils' work.

- The inspector also looked at pupils' work in geography.
- The inspector visited pupils with SEND in their mathematics lessons and spoke to them about their learning. He checked the plans for these pupils and spoke to leaders about how pupils with SEND are supported in other subjects.
- The inspector observed behaviour at breaktimes and spoke to pupils about what behaviour in lessons and outside was normally like.
- The inspector spoke to trust staff about the checks that are carried out on all staff, governors and volunteers who visit the school. He spoke to school office staff about how they check everyone who comes on site is suitable to be there.
- The inspector looked at how leaders record any safeguarding concerns that they may have and how staff are trained to keep children safe.
- The inspector spoke to some parents and carers outside the school and evaluated the responses of 25 parents on Ofsted Parent View, Ofsted's online survey.

Inspection team

Matthew Knox, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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Textphone: 0161 618 8524
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