

Inspection of a good school: Earl Soham Community Primary School

Earl Soham, The Street, Woodbridge, Suffolk IP13 7SA

Inspection date: 25 May 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 are fond of their school and its staff. They say teachers and support staff care for them and look after them well. Pupils say it is easy to make friends here. They feel and are safe. They say that bullying rarely happens. Pupils trust staff and say they can turn to adults in school for any help that is needed.

Pupils buy into and understand the new school values of being 'ready, respectful and safe'. As they go about their learning, pupils, including children in the early years, show courtesy and respect to each other and to their teachers. This sense of harmony is also evident at break and lunchtime. Pupils get along well.

Pupils are noticing the changes that leaders are making to the curriculum. Pupils say they are being asked to think more deeply in subjects such as mathematics. They like the topics that they study. Pupils help each other out in their learning. That said, pupils currently receive an inconsistent quality of education.

Pupils are increasingly motivated to read. They want to receive a 'rainbow reading award'. They like that adults recommend and provide books for them to read.

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

In January 2022, leaders and governors judged that the school's quality of education needed to be better. Supported by the local authority, they are making the necessary changes. Leaders have set out their expectations for excellent pupil behaviour and for a creative and well-ordered curriculum. The impact of leaders' work on pupils' behaviour is evident. Pupils display very positive attitudes to their learning. Leaders' recent work on the curriculum has not had time, and needs more work, to have a sustained impact on pupils' achievement.

Leaders make clear to pupils how important reading is, and how rewarding it can be. From the start of early years, teachers help pupils to become fluent readers. Spurred on by adults' enthusiasm, pupils develop a keen interest in stories. Adults teach phonics well. They make learning to read fun. Adults give pupils plenty of chances to practise phonics to read and write. Pupils who take longer to become confident readers get the support that they need. Most pupils become fluent readers by the end of key stage 1.

Leaders have made sure that there are a lot of books for pupils to read. However, pupils in key stage 2 are not taught reading through a rich, well-sequenced selection of texts, poems and plays. This limits their familiarity with, and depth of understanding of, a wide range of fiction, poetry, plays, and non-fiction books.

Pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) learn from an improving curriculum. Pupils with SEND are supported to access the same curriculum as their classmates. In some subjects, teachers are confident and adept in teaching the new curriculum. This is the case in mathematics, for example. In other subjects, leaders have not set out exactly what pupils need to know. Teachers are still establishing the best way to teach different topics. They have not fully developed their strategies to assess the depth of pupils' grasp of key information. Pupils do not build up detailed knowledge over time in these subjects.

Pupils receive effective personal, social and health education (PSHE). From the start of early years, pupils understand the importance of respectful and kind behaviour. Pupils learn about features of healthy relationships. They also understand right and wrong. Pupils are taught about diverse ways of life such as the differences between a city and rural lifestyle.

Governors share leaders' desire to provide pupils with a better quality of education. Governors have supported the headteacher to plot a well-judged course of action that is leading to the improvements evident within the school.

Parents' responses to Ofsted Parent View show they are overwhelmingly positive about the changes taking place. They comment warmly about the energy and verve that the new leadership has brought, while also preserving the school's family ethos.

In discussion with the headteacher, the inspectors agreed that the quality of education, including that in reading, may usefully serve as a focus for the next inspection.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders make sure pupils are safe. Leaders provide staff with appropriate safeguarding training and regular, relevant, updates. Staff know how to spot the signs that a pupil may be at risk from abuse. Staff use the improved school safeguarding systems to report any concerns they may have about a pupil's welfare.

Leaders are vigilant in making sure pupils get the support that they need. Leaders keep an additional watchful eye on the most vulnerable pupils' well-being each day.

Pupils develop an age-appropriate understanding of the risks that they may face, including those that exist online.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Leaders have made reading high profile across the school. Pupils like to read. However, the reading curriculum in key stage 2 does not provide a well understood, sequential framework through which pupils gain familiarity with, and a deep understanding of, a wide range of fiction, poetry, plays, and non-fiction books. Leaders should bring forward their plans to review and make suitable adjustments to the reading curriculum and how it is taught in key stage 2.
- Leaders have made a considerable number of alterations to the curriculum in many subjects. Aspects of this work are in their infancy. Leaders have not specified precisely what pupils need to learn. Teachers are still developing the most effective ways to teach, and assess pupils' progress through, the curriculum in some subjects. Leaders should take stock of their work on the curriculum and teaching so far. They should then take steps to ensure teachers have knowledge and skills to teach all subjects well. In doing so, leaders must be mindful of the workload and pressures on teachers in this small school.

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 in March 2012.

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	124578
Local authority	Suffolk
Inspection number	10241620
Type of school	Primary
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	61
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Sally Connolly and Patrick Goymer (Co-chairs)
Headteacher	Jen Carlyle
Website	www.earlsoham.suffolk.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	28 March 2017, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- Earl Soham Community Primary School is a smaller-than-average-size primary school.
- The headteacher took up her post in January 2022.
- Most governors took up their roles in this academic year.

Information about this inspection

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. The inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with school leaders and has taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- The inspectors carried out deep dives in art, mathematics and reading. For each deep dive, inspectors met with subject leaders, looked at curriculum documentation, visited a sample of lessons, spoke with teachers, spoke with some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. An inspector also listened to several pupils read.
- Inspectors also spoke with subject leaders and looked at curriculum documentation and some pupils' work in a small number of other subjects.
- Inspectors met with the headteacher, teachers and support staff.

- Inspectors looked at school documentation and spoke with pupils, leaders, teachers, support staff, members of the local governing body, parents and a representative from the local authority to establish the effectiveness of the school's safeguarding procedures.
- An inspector met those responsible for governance. In this meeting were four members of the local governing body, including the co-chairs and vice chair.
- An inspector met with a representative from the local authority.
- Inspectors spent time observing and speaking with pupils at lunchtime.
- Inspectors took account of the views of parents expressed in the 34 responses to Ofsted Parent View and in the discussions held with some parents at the start and end of the school day.
- There were no responses to the pupil or staff surveys.

Inspection team

John Lucas, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Russell Ayling

Ofsted Inspector

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