

# Inspection of Featherby Junior School

Chilham Road, Gillingham, Kent ME8 6BT

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Inspection dates: 28 and 29 June 2022

**Overall effectiveness** **Good**

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The quality of education	<b>Good</b>
Behaviour and attitudes	<b>Good</b>
Personal development	<b>Good</b>
Leadership and management	<b>Good</b>
Previous inspection grade	Inadequate

## **What is it like to attend this school?**

Pupils at Featherby Junior School are kind and friendly. They treat each other and their teachers with respect, noting that 'we're all different but we're all equal'. Instances of bullying are rare. When pupils are unkind to each other, adults help them to sort things out. Consequently, pupils feel safe and well cared for by others in the 'Featherby family'.

Pupils are keen to learn, persevering when they find their work tricky. They enjoy the challenging curriculum that leaders have put in place for them. They talk enthusiastically and knowledgeably about their work. They strive to meet leaders' aspirations for them to be confident, curious and resilient learners.

Leaders are keen for pupils to learn about life beyond their own community. They are mindful of cost not being a barrier to participation. Parents and carers value the broad range of activities that their children get to experience. Pupils engage in clubs and trips that link to their learning and interests. These events support their spiritual and cultural development well.

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

Leaders have swiftly addressed the action points from the last inspection. They have sensibly sought advice from within and beyond the trust to assure themselves about the quality of their work. Safeguarding practice and support for struggling readers have improved.

Leaders and governors are not complacent. They know there is more work to do to make the school even better. They have a clear sense of the priorities for ongoing school improvement and how they will tackle them.

At the last inspection, work to help less-fluent readers was in the early stages. Since then, resources have been put in place and staff have received useful training. As a result, pupils who need to catch up are being supported well, both in and out of class. More widely, ongoing work has developed the reading curriculum and raised the profile of reading in the school. Opportunities for all pupils to read together for pleasure are emerging, with leaders keen to refine the purpose and quality of these experiences.

Pupils' curriculum is broad and coherently planned. It builds usefully on what pupils learned at the infant school, helping pupils to connect their knowledge with increasing sophistication. For instance, during the inspection, pupils described the techniques they had learned in art when making a Viking long boat, and how this helped them to fashion a more intricate clay pot during a future topic.

Leaders keep the curriculum under review. They have identified that some pupils are not yet fluent in basic mathematics such as place value and times tables. The

curriculum has been adjusted to address this knowledge gap. However, there is more work needed to improve pupils' fluency, so that they are not impeded when tackling more complex mathematics work.

The current curriculum was introduced during the pandemic. Leaders have packed it full of knowledge they want pupils to learn. They are mindful that some key concepts might get lost amidst the sheer volume of what is currently included. This risks pupils not securely grasping the specific pieces of knowledge they will need as a firm foundation for their future learning.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are supported appropriately. Leaders understand pupils' needs and work tenaciously to secure extra help for them. However, some parents lack confidence in this aspect of the school's work. While additional support is typically well matched to pupils' wider needs, it does not always focus clearly enough on pupils' learning priorities.

Overall, pupils' attendance at school is high. The proportion of persistently absent pupils is declining over time. This results from adults' useful work to support families and remove potential barriers to attendance. Pupils conduct themselves well, creating a purposeful environment in classrooms and around the school.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Since the last inspection, leaders' focus on safeguarding has been relentless. They have revisited every aspect of their practice, refreshing training and refining arrangements for record-keeping and monitoring. As a result, this important aspect of the school's work has been strengthened.

Staff demonstrate a clear understanding of safeguarding routines. They are suitably alert to signs that a pupil may be at risk of harm. Leaders actively seek advice and support from the local authority, to be sure that they are acting in pupils' best interests. They maintain careful records of their actions, with leaders and governors providing helpful extra scrutiny.

## **What does the school need to do to improve?**

### **(Information for the school and appropriate authority)**

- Although leaders understand the needs of pupils with SEND, they are not always reflected precisely enough in pupils' learning targets. Consequently, help for pupils during lessons is not always matched well enough to help them make rapid progress with their learning. Leaders should ensure that all staff clearly understand pupils' learning needs and use agreed support strategies consistently well during lessons.

- A minority of pupils lack basic mathematical fluency, such as around place value and recall of times tables. This impedes them when applying their mathematical knowledge to more complex work. Leaders should ensure that all pupils become proficient and fluent in basic mathematical functions, so that they can tackle more difficult work with increasing confidence.
- The school's curriculum is relatively new, having been introduced during the pandemic. As such, there are some aspects that need refining, so that the most-important building blocks for future learning do not get lost among all of the other knowledge that leaders are keen for pupils to learn. Leaders should ensure that adaptations to curriculum planning focus clearly on the knowledge that pupils most need to learn and build on over time.

## 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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	144969
<b>Local authority</b>	Medway
<b>Inspection number</b>	10243434
<b>Type of school</b>	Junior
<b>School category</b>	Academy sponsor-led
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	7 to 11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	310
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	Board of trustees
<b>Chair of trust</b>	Tiffany Beck
<b>Headteacher</b>	Amy Eccles
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.featherby-jun.medway.sch.uk">www.featherby-jun.medway.sch.uk</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	7 and 8 December 2021, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

## Information about this school

- Featherby Junior School is an above-average-sized junior school, with three classes in each year group. There is an infant school on the same site. The two schools operate as a partnership, with the same headteacher and executive headteacher. Some other leaders and staff work across both of the schools.
- Featherby is part of the Maritime Academy Trust, which runs 12 schools across Greenwich and Bexley, Medway and Kent. There is a small local academy council in place, which supports the trust in governing both the infant and junior school.
- The school does not use any alternative provision. It does not have any particular religious character.
- A breakfast and after-school club provides wrap-around care for pupils from the infant and junior school.

## 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(5) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that the school no longer requires significant improvement.

- Inspectors met with the headteacher, executive headteacher, senior and middle leaders, and groups of staff and pupils. The lead inspector also spoke with representatives of the trust and the local academy council.
- 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 in these subjects: reading, mathematics, science and art. This involved meeting with leaders of those subjects, visiting lessons, talking to teachers and pupils and looking at pupils' work.
- Inspectors scrutinised the school's safeguarding arrangements. They reviewed the record of recruitment checks on adults working in the school. They met with safeguarding leaders to discuss actions taken to protect pupils who are at potential risk of harm. They reviewed relevant policies and records, including relating to staff training. They also talked to pupils and staff about safeguarding.
- Inspectors spoke with parents at the end of the school day. They also took account of 53 responses to the Ofsted Parent View questionnaire and 25 responses to the staff survey. There were no pupil survey responses to consider.

### **Inspection team**

Kathryn Moles, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Lorraine Clarke	Ofsted Inspector
Catherine Hylands	Ofsted Inspector

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