

Inspection of a good school: Ratton School

Park Avenue, Eastbourne, East Sussex BN21 2XR

Inspection dates: 21 and 22 June 2022

Outcome

Ratton School continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Relationships between teachers and pupils are strong and supportive. There is a positive working atmosphere around the school. Leaders have exceedingly high expectations and there is a strong culture of care. Pupils are happy and safe. They behave well. They show a pride in their school and their achievements. Any instances of bullying are quickly dealt with. Pupils can all name a trusted adult to speak with if they have any problems.

Pupils appreciate the support of the school and value the provision of extra-curricular activities. This extensive programme covers sport, art, drama, dance, reading, science, languages and Irish dance. The school has also received an 'International Schools Award' in recognition of trips abroad including France, Germany, Italy, Japan and Uganda.

The curriculum supports pupils to develop their understanding of fundamental British values. Pupils show respect for one another. They contribute to the school community through various leadership roles. They are well prepared for their future and actively supported in their choice of careers. However, further work is required to highlight career opportunities in subjects such as languages.

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

Leaders and middle leaders have worked hard to construct a curriculum which is ambitious and meets the needs of all pupils. Links with partner primary schools are well developed to ensure curriculum continuity. Links with post-16 providers are developing.

Disadvantaged pupils and pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are actively engaged in all aspects of school life. Teachers know these pupils well and adapt the curriculum to support them effectively. This allows them to quickly catch up on any work which they find challenging. The school continues to ensure that higher prior attainers are sufficiently challenged.

The school is working hard to improve the uptake of languages. They have introduced numerous initiatives to encourage more pupils to develop a love of languages. Literacy and subject-specific vocabulary are well supported across the school. Reading has a high priority and additional reading support is offered to any pupils who fall behind. Relationships and sex education are carefully incorporated in ethics lessons.

Teachers have strong subject knowledge. They use a wide range of assessment to provide helpful feedback to pupils. However, some teachers do not make sure that pupils have securely remembered what they have learned. Some pupils had difficulty recalling the work they have done quite recently. Cross-curricular links, supporting pupils' prior learning, are still being developed.

Behaviour and attitudes are secure across the school. Pupils have a strong understanding of diverse cultures and ethnicities. They recognise that, while racist comments are rare, there is some use of discriminatory language being used inappropriately. In lessons, pupils work with commitment and determination. Low-level disruption is not tolerated. Movement around the school is calm and orderly.

Staff are incredibly positive about the leadership of the school. They feel their workload is suitably managed through sharing resources and working cooperatively. They say that their professional needs are well supported, and they are proud to be a member of staff. The 'achieving excellence' vision is clearly articulated through the school's virtues covering compassion, respect, creativity, teamwork, effort and responsibility.

There is a strong focus on school improvement which has been initiated by the headteacher and actively supported by the executive headteacher. Engagement with parents and carers is secure but some consider that communication is not sufficient. A small minority of parents are unhappy with the school. They do not fully appreciate the work undertaken to support their children's welfare, well-being and mental health.

Governors and trustees have a good understanding of the school. They visit the school regularly and receive quality reports from senior leaders and other staff. Governors are keen and enthusiastic. Training offered by trustees, school leaders and outside agencies has ensured that they are now better equipped for their role.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

There is a strong safeguarding culture throughout the school. Safeguarding issues are understood, and actions taken to support local issues such as knife crime and gangs. Pupils know how to keep themselves safe. They are knowledgeable about issues such as peer-on-peer abuse, upskirting and harmful sexual behaviour.

The welfare, well-being and safety of all pupils is a high priority for the school. Staff receive regular safeguarding training and frequent updates. They know how to identify risks and what to do if they have any concerns. The single central record is compliant. Referrals to external agencies are made in a timely manner.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Teachers do not consistently ensure that pupils remember what they have learned and embed key knowledge in their long-term memory. As a result, pupils sometimes do not achieve as highly as they could. Leaders should ensure that pupils can recall key knowledge with fluency and remember important learning so that they can flourish.
- In addition, links and connections are not always identified and used to deepen and consolidate pupils' learning. As a result, pupils do not always make important connections to help them learn and remember more. Leaders need to align curriculum topics so that pupils can make the right connections at the right time to deepen their understanding.
- A small number of parents do not feel sufficiently engaged in the process of school improvement. As a result, they feel uninformed and do not contribute their views and ideas to improve the school. Leaders should ensure that parents and carers are more engaged in the process of school improvement, including governance.

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 April 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	138474
Local authority	East Sussex
Inspection number	10240271
Type of school	Secondary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1,180
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Carole Bradbrook
Headteacher	Gavin Peevers
Website	www.ratton.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	6 June 2017, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- Ratton School is larger than the average-sized 11 to 16 mixed secondary school which is part of the South Downs Learning Trust.
- Eighteen pupils attend alternative provision at three registered education providers. Eight of these pupils attend on a part-time basis.
- The school meets the requirements of the Baker Clause, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 8 to 13 with information about approved technical educational qualifications and apprenticeships.

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 conducted deep dives in English, science, ethics and art. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, talked to teachers, spoke with pupils about their learning and looked at examples of pupils' work.

- Inspectors held meetings with leaders, staff and pupils. They reviewed the single central record and checked the school’s safeguarding procedures. Inspectors considered school policies, curriculum documentation, behaviour logs, attendance records and destination statistics. The lead inspector met with trustees and governing board members.
- Inspectors considered 184 responses to the Ofsted Parent View online questionnaire and 124 additional written comments from parents. They looked at the survey returns completed by 79 staff and 155 pupils.

Inspection team

Paul Metcalf, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Yvonne Garvey	Ofsted Inspector
James Rouse	Ofsted Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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