

Inspection of RAF Benson Community Primary School

RAF Benson, Wallingford, Oxfordshire OX10 6EP

Inspection dates: 13 and 14 September 2022

Overall effectiveness	Requires improvement
The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Requires improvement
Early years provision	Good
Previous inspection grade	Good

What is it like to attend this school?

The school's vision of '*per conatum ad astra*' (through endeavour to the stars) drives the academic and pastoral ambition of leaders for all pupils at the school.

Pupils benefit from a range of wider opportunities, including sports clubs, learning to play a brass instrument and looking after the school's hens. They embrace positions of leadership responsibility, such as those of science ambassadors and school councillors. Younger children enjoy their outdoor learning, for example when carefully picking apples to make apple crumble.

Staff have high expectations of pupils' behaviour, and model exactly what they expect. As a result, pupils are courteous and try hard to do what's right. On the whole, pupils behave well in lessons and focus on their learning. Pupils are happy in this caring school and feel safe and secure. Bullying can sometimes happen, but pupils are confident that staff will listen and sort things out quickly and effectively.

Leaders are acutely aware of the challenges of a constantly changing school population. Families, particularly those who have a loved one away, or who are new to the school, appreciate the pastoral care provided. All children get the start they need and feel that they belong.

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

Leaders have developed an ambitious curriculum to meet the needs of all learners. They have ensured that it is carefully sequenced so that children's learning builds from early years. Leaders ensure that staff quickly identify the needs of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), and those who are new to the school. These pupils learn well alongside their classmates, benefiting from suitable adaptations and encouragement. Some pupils receive extra support to acquire the social and emotional skills to help them learn even better when they are in the classroom.

Many teachers show real expertise in how they help pupils learn. In mathematics and science, for example, staff follow carefully structured plans to help pupils recap prior learning before moving on to new content. Newer teachers and subject leaders benefit from skilled mentoring and coaching. This contributes to improved curriculum delivery and pupils achieving well overall.

Leaders have prioritised the teaching of reading. Staff begin this work as soon as children join the school in Reception Year and quickly create a love of stories and books that continues through the school. However, some staff lack the knowledge to teach phonics consistently well to the minority of pupils who struggle to learn to read. For example, while adults frequently listen to pupils read, they do not ensure that they use a book that is well matched to the sounds that pupils know and can read.

Children in early years get off to a strong start, settling quickly into clear routines. They learn to play cooperatively and take advantage of considered learning opportunities, such as developing their coordination by balancing marbles on top of golf tees. Pupils want to behave well. They respond positively to the school's reward system, contributing their tokens to their house with pride. Very occasionally, older pupils do not regulate their behaviour appropriately. This can slow teaching and hamper pupils' learning.

The school's work to support pupils' personal development is a strength. Leaders ensure that pupils have regular opportunities to learn about their unique locality and the wider world. Pupils gain a range of strategies to increase their independence and resilience. The personal, social, health and economic education programme helps them to learn to look after their bodies and their minds. Pupils enjoy expressing opinions and hearing the views of others, both as part of the curriculum and in assemblies. Pupils have a good understanding of the risks they may face outside the base. They know how to keep themselves safe when online. Through well-considered activities, they experience democracy in action and learn about the importance of diversity and equality. This helps them to prepare for life in modern Britain. Trips, special events and wider learning opportunities broaden pupils' cultural understanding.

Leaders and governors have an accurate view of the school's strengths and priorities. Governors are working together to more effectively challenge and support the school. There is more to do to ensure that they meet their statutory responsibilities consistently, including those related to pupils with SEND. Leaders recognise the need to strengthen communication with parents and carers, especially parents of pupils with SEND.

Staff are proud to be part of the team and enjoy contributing to the vision for all pupils. They value the high-quality training and development opportunities provided.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders ensure that safeguarding is a priority. Staff receive regular training and updates. They have a secure understanding of what to look for and how to respond to any safeguarding worry. Staff report concerns promptly and leaders take these concerns seriously. At the time of the inspection, there were some gaps in some safeguarding records. Leaders acted quickly to rectify these issues and put steps in place to ensure that all records are kept according to guidance. There were some omissions in the single central record, and these were rectified during the inspection.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Safeguarding record-keeping is not always thorough enough. Occasionally, the chronologies of concerns about pupils are not clear and leaders have not recorded their decision-making and all actions carried out in response to concerns. This risks important information or decisions being overlooked, should there be further concerns about any pupils. Leaders should ensure that the chronology of any concerns about pupils, and their decision-making in response to these, are sufficiently detailed and clear.
- Those responsible for governance have not assured themselves that all statutory duties are fulfilled in a timely fashion. This means that school leaders are not always supported and challenged to further improve the school. Governors need a deeper understanding of their roles and responsibilities and to be systematic in their oversight so that they can assure themselves that all aspects of the provision, particularly for pupils with SEND, are delivered to the quality intended.
- The school's approach to teaching the weakest readers is not well embedded. This means that some pupils are not able to practise and apply their phonics knowledge with the necessary frequency to become fluent and confident readers. Leaders must ensure that all staff know how to support pupils as they learn to read and follow the school's agreed process, including matching reading books to the sounds that pupils know.

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.

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	123028
Local authority	Oxfordshire
Inspection number	10242141
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	176
Appropriate authority	Local authority
Chair of governing body	Nikki Gasan
Headteacher	Steph Fawdry
Website	www.raf-benson.oxon.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	18 July 2017, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- RAF Benson Primary School is situated on a Royal Air Force (RAF) base and is slightly smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- The majority of the teaching staff and governors, including the chair of governors, have changed since the previous inspection.
- The vast majority of pupils come from families where a parent or carer is a serving member of the Armed Forces and, consequently, the number of pupils who move in and out of the school at different times is very high.
- The school does not currently use any alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

- This was the first routine inspection the school had 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 held meetings with the headteacher, assistant headteacher and other senior leaders. The lead inspector met with a group of governors, including the chair of governors. He also held an online meeting with two representatives from Oxfordshire local authority.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in reading, mathematics, science and history. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers and teaching assistants, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at a sample of pupils' work. The lead inspector also heard pupils read.
- To inspect safeguarding, inspectors reviewed a wide range of safeguarding documentation, including the school's record of recruitment checks. The lead inspector met with the designated safeguarding leads. Inspectors also spoke with pupils and staff.
- Inspectors took account of parents' responses to Ofsted Parent View and parents' written comments. An inspector also spoke to groups of parents on the morning of the first day of the inspection.
- Inspectors gathered pupils' views throughout the day, including during lesson visits and at breaktimes.
- Inspectors met with a range of staff to gather their views about the school and took account of staff's responses to Ofsted's confidential staff questionnaire.

Inspection team

Alan Derry, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Judith O'Hare

Ofsted 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