

Inspection of a good school: Saxmundham Primary School

Brook Farm Road, Saxmundham, Suffolk IP17 1XQ

Inspection dates:

19 and 20 October 2022

Outcome

There has been no change to this school's overall judgement of good as a result of this ungraded (section 8) inspection. However, the evidence gathered suggests that the inspection grade might not be as high if a graded (section 5) inspection were carried out now. The next inspection will therefore be a graded inspection.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are friendly, welcoming and eager to learn. Pupils enjoy sharing the knowledge they gain across a broad range of subjects. They make connections in their learning and like to explore new ideas. Pupils in Year 6 are well prepared for secondary school. Until recently, pupils in the early years and key stage 1 had been less well prepared for their next steps in education. This is being addressed, but there is more work to do. Younger pupils are responding more positively to the higher expectations of what they can and should achieve. This includes in mathematics and in learning to read.

Pupils say that behaviour has improved a lot. Classrooms are now calm and purposeful places to learn. Everyone is clear what is expected of them. Most pupils say there is much less bullying than there was before. Pupils are more confident to report issues because staff listen to their concerns and deal with unacceptable behaviour. Pupils who find it difficult to manage their behaviour are supported well. They develop strategies that help them to be successful in school.

Parents are generally positive. They welcome the changes leaders are making to improve pupils' behaviour and deal effectively with bullying.

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

The trust and local advisory board recognised that standards in the school had declined in recent years. Leaders are taking positive steps to address this. There are tangible improvements in pupils' behaviour. There is a growing culture of respect. Bullying is not tolerated. There is more work to do to ensure that behaviour is managed consistently well so that all pupils and parents feel confident that concerns they raise are followed up robustly and resolved.

Leaders identified that the programme for early reading was not being taught well. As a result, too many pupils are not achieving well enough in reading in key stage 1. Staff have received further training to deliver the early reading programme effectively. Leaders check that the programme is being taught as they intend. Children are introduced to phonics at the start of the Reception Year. Pupils in key stage 1 have extra phonics sessions to help them catch up and secure their phonics knowledge. The books that pupils read are well matched to the sounds that they know. This gives pupils the practice they need to develop their reading fluency. Appropriate support is in place for older pupils who are not yet confident readers. This support is helping pupils catch up quickly with their reading.

Leaders have put in place an ambitious curriculum across a broad range of subjects. The curriculum is logically sequenced. Teachers plan lessons that build on what pupils have learned before. Staff routinely check what pupils know and understand before they move on to new learning. They quickly address pupils' misconceptions. Pupils are confident in their number facts and calculations because of leaders' work to improve the mathematics curriculum in key stage 1. Teachers adapt the curriculum well to meet the needs of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Pupils regularly practise and apply what they are learning to secure their knowledge.

The early years provision has been extended to include a Nursery class. Across the early years there is a strong focus on developing children's language. Children develop their understanding of mathematics through carefully planned activities. Children learn to listen to adults and to each other. They play and learn well together. Children understand and follow the routines that help them to become confident and independent in their learning.

In most subjects, the curriculum sets out what pupils should learn from Year 1 to Year 6. The curriculum does not identify how children's learning in the early years prepares them for the range of subjects they will be learning in key stage 1. Leaders have not ensured that the curriculum takes account of what pupils should learn in the early years so that subject leaders are confident that children are well prepared for their next stage of learning.

The curriculum supports pupils' wider development well. Pupils learn about different cultures, traditions and beliefs. They firmly believe that everyone should be treated equally. They understand the importance of respecting each other's differences. Pupils are proud to be elected to represent their class as members of school council. Pupils know it is important to speak out when things are not right. Leaders ensure that pupils develop their understanding of tolerance and contribute positively to a respectful school culture.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders have strengthened the culture of safeguarding. This includes tackling prejudicial language and bullying. Leaders have established clear procedures for reporting and recording safeguarding concerns. Staff use these systems effectively. Regular training and safeguarding updates help keep staff's knowledge up to date. Staff are vigilant. They know how to recognise the signs of potential abuse. Leaders act promptly. They work

effectively with other agencies to help vulnerable families access the support they need. Pupils learn how to keep themselves and others safe, including when online.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Leaders have introduced a new policy to manage pupils' behaviour. Not all parents and pupils are confident that incidents of poor behaviour and bullying are followed up robustly. Leaders should ensure that the new behaviour policy is implemented consistently well. This includes communicating with parents when incidents of behaviour are being addressed in school.
- Previously, staff were not well trained to deliver the school's phonics programme, meaning many pupils did not read as well as they should. Recent training has helped staff to teach the programme as leaders intend. Leaders should ensure that staff continue to receive the guidance and training they need so that pupils learn to read confidently and fluently at an early stage.
- Subject leaders are knowledgeable about their subjects but are less knowledgeable about the early years foundation stage. Leaders should ensure that all subject leaders understand how children's learning and experiences in the early years prepare them for learning in each subject in key stage 1. Subject leaders should ensure that the knowledge and understanding that children should gain in the early years are set out clearly as part of the school's curriculum so that they can assure themselves that children in the early years are well prepared for their next stage of learning.

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 an ungraded inspection, and it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on an ungraded inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school would now receive a higher or lower grade, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection, which is carried out under section 5 of the Act. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the ungraded inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the ungraded inspection a graded inspection immediately.

This is the first ungraded inspection since we judged the predecessor school, Saxmundham Primary School, to be good in March 2018.

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	146494
Local authority	Suffolk
Inspection number	10255155
Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	255
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Jeremy Mead
Headteacher	Cheryl Singleton
Website	www.saxmundhamprimary.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- Saxmundham Primary School is part of the Avocet Academy Trust, which consists of five primary schools. Saxmundham Primary School joined the trust in November 2018.
- The chief executive officer of the trust took on the role of interim headteacher in September 2022.
- In September 2022, the trust opened a new Nursery provision for children aged three years old.
- The trust runs a breakfast and after-school club.
- The school makes use of alternative provision.

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 their evaluation of the school.
- The inspector met with the interim headteacher, the deputy headteacher, the special educational needs coordinator and the family welfare practitioner.

- The inspector met with the chair of trustees, the chair and vice-chair of the local advisory board, and two members of the local advisory board.
- The inspector carried out deep dives in early reading, mathematics and art. The inspector met with subject leaders, visited lessons, considered curriculum plans, spoke with pupils, looked at pupils' books, and met with class teachers and teaching assistants. The inspector also observed pupils reading.
- The inspector met with the early years team to discuss the curriculum for children in the Nursery and Reception classes. The inspector discussed the provision for pupils' wider development with the deputy headteacher.
- The inspector reviewed the information available on the school's website, including school policies and information about the curriculum.
- The inspector met with the designated safeguarding leader to discuss the arrangements that are in place to support safeguarding. The inspector scrutinised the single central record of pre-employment checks and the school's safeguarding records.
- The inspector reviewed the school's behaviour records, including records of incidents of bullying and how these are followed up, and records of suspensions. The inspector observed pupils' behaviour in lessons and at breaktimes.
- The inspector considered the 27 responses to Ofsted Parent View, including 22 free-text comments. The inspector took account of the 26 responses to the staff survey. The inspector spoke with pupils to gather their views on the school.

Inspection team

Katherine Douglas

His Majesty's Inspector

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