

Inspection of Redcastle Family School

St Martin's Way, Thetford, Norfolk IP24 3PU

Inspection dates: 15 and 16 November 2022

Overall effectiveness **Good**

The quality of education **Good**

Behaviour and attitudes **Good**

Personal development **Good**

Leadership and management **Good**

Early years provision **Good**

Previous inspection grade Good

What is it like to attend this school?

Redcastle Family School truly is a 'family' school, where pupils are happy, safe and enjoy learning. Adults care deeply for pupils and know them well. Pupils are valued, listened to, and seen as individuals. The positive relationships between adults and pupils mean that most behave very well.

Pupils live up to the high expectations adults set. They work hard in class, listen to each other, and enjoy socialising in the playground. Pupils know that everyone is different. They enjoy learning about people's different beliefs and backgrounds and treat everyone as individuals.

Pupils know the difference between bullying and falling out with friends. Bullying happens infrequently. If it does happen, adults step in quickly to deal with it. Pupils know that adults will help them if they have a problem.

The wide range of extra opportunities pupils have access to helps them develop as active and responsible citizens of Thetford. Older pupils love carrying out their 'monitor' roles. They develop a strong sense of responsibility.

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

Leaders have designed a curriculum that clearly and deliberately sets out the important knowledge and skills pupils will learn. In many subjects, pupils develop rich and detailed knowledge. Their learning builds on what pupils already know. Older pupils know much about different periods in history because they have a secure understanding of key concepts such as chronology. In a small number of subjects, leaders have not been as precise in setting out the knowledge and skills pupils need to learn. In these subjects, pupils do not develop the depth of knowledge that they do in other subjects because staff do not have a unified understanding of what to teach and when.

Teachers have a good knowledge of the subjects they teach. They explain new information to pupils clearly and provide opportunities to practise and revise new concepts. This helps pupils remember more over time.

Reading is given high priority. Teachers are trained well to teach phonics. This means the youngest pupils learn to read well. They become accurate and fluent readers, reading books that help them learn more about different subjects as they move through the school. Pupils enjoy hearing adults read to them. This happens regularly. Hearing a range of stories inspires pupils to read different genres of books that they may not otherwise have chosen to read.

Adults prioritise children's language and vocabulary in the early years. Children listen to a wide range of stories, rhymes and poems. Adults are skilled at supporting children to learn and use many new words. Children are taught to be kind, friendly

and to share equipment, which they do. The youngest children are well cared for. Adults know every child as an individual, which means their specific needs are met well. The Nursery and Reception classes provide children with an excellent start to their time in school.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) learn well. They benefit from carefully adapted activities that allow them to learn the same ambitious curriculum as their peers. Leaders use 'individual learning plans' to set out the additional support pupils with SEND will receive. In some cases, the information in these plans is too generic. It does not always precisely set out what pupils will learn. Consequently, leaders cannot accurately see if this extra support is making the intended difference.

Pupils generally behave well in school. They show respect to adults and each other. Playtimes are happy and pupils from different classes mix well. A small number of pupils need extra support to help them behave well. Leaders' provision for these pupils is of a high quality. Pupils who attend the school's specialist resource base receive excellent support. They attend lessons with their friends in the mainstream classes when they feel ready.

Pupils have many opportunities to take part in clubs and activities. Many of these are sporting clubs. Pupils have the chance to compete against other schools in local competitions and festivals. They also have the opportunity to attend after-school clubs such as those for choir and gardening.

Senior leaders provide effective support for teachers, especially when helping them manage their workload. Teachers who are new to the profession are supported extremely well to learn the ropes.

Governors have an accurate view of the school. They provide effective support to leaders, but do not shy away from asking challenging questions when needed. They do not simply take what leaders tell them at face value. Governors make regular visits to school to see for themselves how well it is operating.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Staff are well trained to be able to spot if a pupil might need additional support. If pupils do need help, leaders work well with outside agencies. They quickly follow up on referrals if they feel a pupil is not receiving the help they need. There is a well-established culture of vigilance in school to make sure pupils are safe and know how to stay safe in the local community.

Governors make regular checks to satisfy themselves that leaders are doing all they should. Checks on adults who start work in the school are comprehensive and accurately recorded.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In a small number of subjects, leaders have not identified the precise knowledge pupils need to know and remember. This means teachers are not clear on what to teach and when. Leaders should ensure that they complete the work they have already started to identify precisely what pupils need to learn in these remaining subjects so that pupils develop the detailed knowledge they need in order to do well.
- The 'individual learning plans' leaders use to set out the additional support pupils with SEND will receive are not always specific enough. They do not identify exactly what pupils will learn or be able to do. This makes it difficult for leaders to check whether additional support is working effectively. Leaders should ensure that individual learning plans for pupils with SEND contain sufficient information so they can check carefully that the support is helping pupils to learn well.

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	120905
Local authority	Norfolk
Inspection number	10242088
Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	241
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Maureen Eade
Headteacher	James Julian
Website	www.redcastleschool.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	5 July 2017, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school runs an on-site specialist resource base provision for pupils with autism spectrum disorder. This provision currently has 12 pupils on roll.
- The school does not currently use 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 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 carried out deep dives in these subjects: reading, mathematics, science and history. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke with teachers, spoke with some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. The lead inspector listened to pupils from Years 1, 2 and 3 read to an adult.

- Inspectors evaluated the curriculum plans and spoke with leaders and pupils about several other subjects.
- Inspectors held meetings with the headteacher, deputy headteacher, the early years leader and the pastoral support manager. The lead inspector held a meeting with members of the governing body and a meeting with a representative of the local authority.
- To inspect safeguarding, inspectors scrutinised the single central record, reviewed safeguarding paperwork and systems. Inspectors spoke with leaders, teachers, support staff, governors and pupils to evaluate the culture of safeguarding in school.
- Inspectors considered responses to Ofsted’s questionnaire for parents, along with the responses to Ofsted’s questionnaire for staff.

Inspection team

Nathan Lowe, lead inspector

His Majesty’s Inspector

Ashley Best-White

Ofsted Inspector

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