

Inspection of a good school: Rotherfield Primary School

North Street, Rotherfield, Crowborough, East Sussex TN6 3NA

Inspection dates:

10 and 11 January 2023

Outcome

Rotherfield Primary School continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils arrive to a warm welcome at the school gate. This creates a buzz of excitement and a positive start to the day. Because this is a small school, pupils say that they all get to know one another here and say that 'everyone can have a friend'. This inclusivity can be seen at breaktimes, when pupils are quick to invite or include others in their imaginative games.

Parents and carers are overwhelmingly supportive of the school. They particularly appreciate the strong sense of family and community that is nurtured here. Pupils feel happy, safe and secure. They are confident to talk to a trusted adult if they are worried. They know that if bullying were to happen, staff would provide kindness and care.

The curriculum helps prepare pupils for life in the diverse wider world. Leaders have high expectations of all pupils to work hard and reach their potential in all subjects. Pupils enjoy their learning. They behave well in class and focus carefully on the tasks set. Pupils particularly appreciate the lively learning discussions with their 'talk partners'. They are confident in sharing their thoughts and points of view, but also listen respectfully to others.

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

Leaders are focused on creating and embedding a curriculum that is broad and rich in knowledge. They are identifying the important knowledge and skills that pupils should learn in each subject right from when they first start school. Clear links with the recently revised school vision and values underpin this work. Leaders ensure the early identification of any additional needs a pupil may have. Most staff are highly skilled in adapting the curriculum to ensure that the needs of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are met. However, there is not yet a clearly established approach to check precisely what pupils have learned from the intended curriculum across all the foundation subjects. This means that teachers are not always clear about what pupils know and remember and where they may need additional support.

Learning to read is one of leaders' top priorities. Children in Reception and key stage 1 have phonics lessons every day. Teachers regularly identify what next steps are needed to ensure that all pupils develop the reading skills they need. Pupils get lots of practice as they read books that are well matched to the letters and sounds they are learning. This helps them to become fluent readers. However, some older pupils at the earliest stages of reading are not taught using the same consistent standard and approach. Not all adults who support pupils in learning to read have received the specialist training. This means that a small group of pupils do not become confident readers as quickly as they could.

In line with the whole-school vision to 'build a community of caring, resilient learners', a new approach to behaviour is being implemented. The impact of this is becoming evident in how pupils take responsibility for their actions and celebrate their achievements. Pupils talk wisely about how making mistakes is 'all part of learning'. In early years, strong and caring relationships are quickly established. Children play together happily and interact kindly with each other. Teaching children important vocabulary is a priority. Leaders know that an increased focus on early communication will help further develop children's early communication skills. The 'buddy' system between Year 5 pupils and Reception children helps new children settle quickly into school. All these developments exemplify the actions taken by leaders to create a secure school environment in which all pupils can flourish.

Leaders provide a wealth of opportunities to promote and develop pupils' leadership skills. Pupils vote for school council representatives and house captains. Through this, they learn about democracy. Visitor tours are conducted by pupils, who are proud ambassadors for their school. A range of trips and activities to help prepare pupils for life beyond school has been carefully mapped out. All pupils, including those with SEND, are included in these. Many pupils enjoy learning a musical instrument, and members of the choir spoke about their upcoming performance at the O2 Arena. Learning at the forest-school provision is provided for all. These carefully planned sessions help pupils to develop their problem-solving skills and resilience.

Governors are dedicated to supporting leaders in their ongoing efforts to improve attendance. They know that pupils learn and achieve their best when they come to school. Governors are knowledgeable about the school. They are well informed about the work of school leaders and their priorities in the ongoing improvements to the school.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

All staff see safeguarding as a vital aspect of their role. Leaders have established clear training and regular updates. This makes sure that everyone knows how to raise a concern. Leaders act immediately on any worries brought to them. Diligent record-keeping is well established, and this ensures that leaders are clear about what help a pupil may need. When appropriate, they get support from external agencies with sensitivity and care.

Pupils are taught about how to keep themselves safe through the curriculum. They trust adults in the school to listen to them and to help them if they need support.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Assessment in the foundation subjects is not yet consistently in place. As a result, teachers and subject leaders do not always know how secure pupils are in their knowledge acquisition. Leaders now need to establish a clear approach to checking what pupils know and remember so that knowledge is embedded, and pupils can use it fluently.
- Some older pupils who are at the early stages of learning to read are not getting the targeted support needed to learn phonics. This means that some pupils are not able to decode words confidently and read fluently. Leaders need to ensure that every adult has the knowledge and expertise to teach phonics so that all pupils can learn to enjoy reading.

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 second ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be good in May 2012.

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	114416
Local authority	East Sussex
Inspection number	10227895
Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	210
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Helen Miller
Headteacher	Kate Bishop
Website	www.rotherfieldprimary.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	3 May 2017, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school runs its own morning breakfast club and after-school clubs for pupils.
- The school does not make use of any alternative providers.

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 headteacher, the deputy headteacher, the inclusion manager, subject leaders, teachers and teaching assistants.
- The inspector met with governors, including the chair of the governing body.
- The inspector carried out deep dives in early reading, mathematics and history. For each deep dive, the inspector met with subject leaders, looked at curriculum plans, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.

- The inspector also observed pupils' behaviour in lessons and outside during social times.
- The inspector reviewed the arrangements for safeguarding by scrutinising safeguarding records and policies, speaking to staff and governors, and discussing this with pupils.
- The inspector considered the views of parents shared through Ofsted Parent View. The inspector gathered the views of pupils and staff through surveys and discussions conducted throughout the inspection.
- The inspector reviewed a range of the school's documentation, including school improvement documentation and minutes of governing body meetings.

Inspection team

Jo Petch, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

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