

Inspection of Sellindge Primary School

Main Road, Sellindge, Ashford, Kent TN25 6JY

Inspection dates: 2 and 3 February 2023

Overall effectiveness

Good

The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Outstanding
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Good
Early years provision	Outstanding
Previous inspection grade	Outstanding

This school was last inspected 13 years ago and judged 'Outstanding' under a previous inspection framework. This reflected the school's overall effectiveness under the inspection framework in use at the time.

From then until November 2020, the school was exempted by law from routine inspection, so there has been a longer gap than usual between inspections. Judgements in this report are based on the current inspection framework and also reflect changes that may have happened at any point since the last inspection.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils love their school. They are proud of their work and happy to share their achievements with visitors. Children in Reception are confident and equally keen to share their ideas. Expectations of behaviour and engagement in learning are very high. Everyday routines are firmly established. The communal 'daily mile' is accomplished without fuss, although an inherent sense of fun is palpable, even when mornings are grey, and Ofsted is inspecting.

Pupils told inspectors that they feel safe here, including from bullying. They say that staff deal 'quickly' and 'well' with any problems. Pupils themselves disapprove of behaviour that is anything less than perfect. This results in a good degree of harmony and a purposeful learning environment across the school.

Pupils are kind and welcoming to newcomers. This includes recent arrivals, who may need additional help linked to barriers with language. Classroom visits showed staff to be adept at responding when extra support is needed by these new joiners. Pupils also play their part. All are expected to contribute positively to school life. This includes pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), who are supported well but expected to work equally as hard as their peers.

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

This is an expanding and improving school. Some elements are clearly exceptional, not least the flying start children get in Reception Year. Leaders at all levels are open, honest and reflective. Curriculum leadership is evolving. Until recently the school had a four- or two-year rolling curriculum with mixed year groups. Staff have successfully refined this approach in light of single year-group classes in place since September 2022.

Some members of staff are new to the school and to their curriculum leadership roles. Senior leaders know that some elements of the curriculum need to be refined further. Their cycle of 'simmering' and 'boiling' subject reviews help staff identify where things are strong and where additional work still needs to be done. This currently includes design and technology (DT) and physical education (PE), where staff are less secure in teaching the key knowledge and skills pupils should acquire over time.

Pupils enjoy their mathematics lessons. Teachers are highly ambitious in their approach. They adapt their teaching with confidence when they need to. This means that pupils who need additional support, including those with SEND, get the help they need in a timely manner. Science is also a subject that staff are confident in teaching. Pupils are equally assured when recalling previous learning in science. This includes the entirely sensible strategy of looking back through their own work to remind themselves of what they already know.

The school's work to teach pupils to read and to enjoy books and the written word is effective. A new phonics programme is in place and delivered expertly by staff. Children in Reception are hungry to become fluent readers. They quickly learn the sounds they need to help them to read. 'Tricky words' are tackled with relish because staff give them the time and the confidence to learn and remember them.

Older pupils also like reading. Leaders have created a list of key texts that pupils will explore as they move through the school. This includes a growing number by varied authors, aimed at developing pupils' experience of the world well beyond the school gate.

Pupils display good social skills here. They work together well across the curriculum, both in and outside the classroom. The school's personal, social and health education curriculum supports pupils to understand about relationships and concepts, such as British values, including democracy and the rule of law. However, some elements are less established. This includes pupils' understanding of different cultures and beliefs. While some aspects of pupils' spiritual, moral and social development are supported appropriately, their cultural awareness is less well developed. Leaders have started to address this, but they know that there needs to be a more coherent and joined-up approach to this aspect of the school's work.

There is a strong culture of mutual support among staff. They say that they feel valued. They appreciate that leaders are considerate of their workload and well-being.

The vast majority of parents who responded to Ofsted Parent View are also positive about the school and the way it is led. Most would recommend the school. Some want communication to be better, though a typical sentiment recorded in a free-text message said, 'The care, communication, love and community feel is absolutely amazing.'

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

The culture to safeguard pupils is strong here. It starts at the top, though staff know that it is everyone's duty to ensure that pupils are safe. Governors are also keenly aware of their statutory duties to protect the welfare, health and safety of pupils, staff and visitors at this school.

Staff know what to do if they have concerns. Their training is up to date. Systems to report concerns are sound. Work with outside agencies and with other schools is timely and effective. Consequently, pupils and their families get the support they need when concerns are raised.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Not all subject curriculum plans clearly identify the key knowledge pupils will learn over time. This is particularly the case for PE and for DT. This means that teachers sometimes struggle to identify the learning they need to cover, so that pupils' knowledge, skills and understanding develop as well as they should as they move through the school. Work has started to address this. Leaders now need to act with more urgency to ensure that staff know precisely what they need to teach, and when, across the whole curriculum.
- The school's provision to develop pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding is under-developed. This is particularly the case regarding pupils' knowledge of different cultures, both in Britain and the wider world. Some work is under way to address this. However, a more formal and coherent approach is needed to ensure that pupils' understanding of life in modern Britain and the world beyond is as strong as it might be.

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	118387
Local authority	Kent
Inspection number	10256333
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	142
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Robert Bristow
Headteacher	Jo Wren
Website	www.sellindge-ashford.co.uk/
Date of previous inspection	10 June 2009

Information about this school

- This is a small community primary school, which is slowly expanding. Until recently the school operated mixed-year classes. Since September 2022, the school has operated with single-year classes from Reception through to Year 6.
- The school does not 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 held a wide range of meetings with senior leaders, members of the school's wider leadership team, curriculum leaders and teaching and support staff.
- The lead inspector met with the chair of the governing body accompanied by three other governors. He also met with a representative of the local authority.

- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics, science and PE. Deep dives included visiting lessons, looking at pupils' work, and talking to leaders, teachers and pupils. Inspectors also considered elements of other curriculum subjects in making their judgement on the quality of education the school provides.
- The lead inspector heard pupils from Years 1 and 3 read to a member of staff.
- Inspectors checked a range of policies and documents, including the school's single central record. They also reviewed the school's website and other records regarding the welfare, health and safety of pupils and staff.
- Inspectors gathered evidence to explore the impact of pupils' behaviour, the school's wider curriculum offer and how leaders support staff with their workload.
- Pupils were talked to throughout the inspection to gain their views about the school. The lead inspector also met formally with a representative group of pupils.
- Inspectors considered the views of parents submitted through Ofsted Parent View. The views of staff were also considered through Ofsted's confidential staff survey.

Inspection team

Clive Close, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Stephen Long

His Majesty's Inspector

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