

Inspection of Sunnymede Infant School

Mons Avenue, Billericay, Essex CM11 2HQ

Inspection dates: 2 and 3 February 2023

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?

Sunnymede is a small and friendly infant school. Pupils enjoy going to school and spending time with their friends. Pupils are kind and helpful. They are well mannered and are polite to staff and visitors.

Leaders and staff want the very best for pupils. They want pupils to enjoy their learning and to learn a lot. Pupils do well at Sunnymede. They learn about a wide range of subjects and topics. Most pupils can read and write and understand mathematics at a level appropriate to their age when they leave to join the junior school at the end of Year 2.

Pupils feel safe at school. Bullying happens very rarely. When it does happen, it is taken seriously and dealt with quickly. Pupils behave well in their classrooms and as they move around the school. They listen carefully to what their teachers say and follow instructions quickly.

Pupils can attend a range of after-school clubs. They go on trips to places of interest, including the local public library. Pupils learn about different countries and cultures. They learn about the ways in which people can be different from each other and how it is important for everyone to get on well together.

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

The school has been through some challenging times in recent years. In addition to the COVID-19 pandemic, there have been several changes of leadership. Governors are currently consulting on a proposal for the infant school to merge with the junior school next door. Despite all these distractions, leaders and governors have managed to keep their focus on the right things.

Leaders have ensured that a well-planned curriculum is in place for all subjects, from early years through to the end of Year 2. Leaders have identified the small steps of learning that pupils need to take in each subject. Teachers regularly check how well pupils are learning these steps and adjust their plans accordingly.

The curriculum is better developed in some subjects than in others. There has not yet been enough time for all subjects to become as effective as the strongest subjects of reading, mathematics and science. Where this is the case, although pupils do well, they do not achieve as highly as they could.

Leaders have focused well on improving reading. Leaders have introduced a well-focused phonics programme. Staff have been trained to deliver the programme and do so effectively. The reading leader provides ongoing training and support to ensure that phonics teaching continually improves. Children in the Reception classes get off to a strong start with learning to read. Most pupils can read competently for their age by the time they leave the school.

Staff have the knowledge they need to deliver the curriculum well. They think carefully about how best to teach pupils about different aspects of subjects. For example, in mathematics, teachers give pupils suitable equipment to help them work things out. In early years, children are given small groups of objects to count when they first start to learn about addition.

Aspects of the English curriculum, most notably writing, are the least well developed. Teaching of the 'secretarial' elements of writing (that is, handwriting and spelling) has not been as successful as other aspects of the English curriculum. Some pupils' handwriting is difficult to read, and others form letters incorrectly. Some pupils do not spell simple, commonly used words correctly. Recent changes to the way in which handwriting and spelling are taught have been positive. However, it is too soon to see the full impact of these.

Leaders make sure that pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) do well at school. Pupils' needs are identified quickly, and suitable action is taken to address these. Changes are made to the way in which the curriculum is delivered to ensure that pupils with SEND are successful. Leaders have the same high expectations for pupils with SEND that they have for all pupils.

Staff make sure that pupils know and follow the school's rules. They expect pupils to behave sensibly and listen carefully. As a result, classrooms are calm places where pupils can learn.

Pupils are taught about values such as respect. Staff notice when pupils display these qualities and reward them for doing so. Pupils are given opportunities to develop responsibility, such as by becoming a member of the school council.

Staff feel well supported by the school's leaders. They say that leaders are always available to listen and help. Leaders have taken a range of actions to reduce workload and these are appreciated by staff.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders have created a strong safeguarding culture. Pupils are known well and are looked after carefully. Pupils and their parents and carers rightly feel that pupils are safe at school. Pre-appointment checks are carried out diligently to ensure that only suitable people are employed to work at the school. The school's single central record includes all the required information about these checks.

The designated safeguarding lead has a good understanding of the role. Staff have been trained well to recognise possible signs of abuse and neglect. They report their concerns promptly. Leaders take appropriate and timely action in response to those concerns.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The curriculum is more developed and well established in some subjects than in others. Where the curriculum is less developed, pupils do not remember as much of what they have been taught or achieve as highly as they do in more developed subjects. Leaders should continue to develop the curriculum and embed changes that have already been made, so that all pupils achieve highly.
- Writing is less effective than other aspects of the English curriculum, particularly handwriting and spelling. As a result, these 'secretarial' elements of some pupils' writing are less developed than they could be. Leaders should take further action to ensure that all pupils are able to form letters correctly, write clearly using neat and easily legible handwriting, and spell words correctly, as appropriate to their age.

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	114942
Local authority	Essex
Inspection number	10240991
Type of school	Infant
School category	Foundation
Age range of pupils	4 to 7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	176
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Tony Ward and Damian Pye
Headteacher	Gill Marrion
Website	www.sunnymede-inf.essex.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	12 and 13 November 2019, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The previous headteacher left in the school in April 2022 following an extended period of leave. The previous deputy headteacher acted in the role of headteacher from April 2021 until August 2022.
- The current interim headteacher joined the school in September 2022, having provided consultancy support to the acting headteacher previously.
- The current deputy headteacher joined the school initially as early years leader in April 2021 and acted as deputy headteacher from then until August 2022. She became substantive deputy headteacher in September 2022.
- The school is currently in the final stages of consulting on plans to merge with the junior school on the same site. The plan being consulted on is for the two schools to merge and become a full primary school on 1 September 2023.

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 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 met with the interim headteacher, the deputy headteacher, the special educational needs coordinator, groups of staff, the headteacher of the junior school and a group of governors, including the joint chairs of the governing body. The inspector spoke with a representative of the local authority on the telephone.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in reading, mathematics, art and science. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors also looked at samples of pupils' writing, listened to pupils reading, visited an assembly, met with the school council, scrutinised a range of school documents and observed pupils during playtime.
- In order to check the effectiveness of safeguarding, inspectors checked the single central record of pre-appointment checks, looked at records of child protection concerns and spoke with parents, staff and pupils.
- Inspectors took account of 34 responses to Ofsted Parent View and the same number of free-text comments. They also took account of 19 responses to the staff survey and 81 responses to the pupil survey. The lead inspector spoke with one parent on the telephone.

Inspection team

Wendy Varney, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Chris Stainsby

His Majesty's Inspector

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