

Inspection of a good school: South Borough Primary School

Stagshaw Close, Postley Road, Maidstone, Kent ME15 6TL

Inspection dates: 25 and 26 April 2023

Outcome

South Borough Primary School continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

The school values of 'respect, kindness and determination' shine through this welcoming school. They are clear to see in the way that pupils approach their learning and treat each other. Pupils meet teachers' high expectations for their personal, social and academic achievements.

Pupils learn how to make a positive contribution to society. They describe the school as 'a lovely community, a good society'. They are proud of the school, their own achievements and the achievements of others. Parents appreciate this culture, with one saying, 'South Borough has instilled in our child a strong sense of community. She has been taught to genuinely care about others and their success.'

Pupils are happy, enjoy learning and feel safe in school. Pupils behave well. They know and understand the expected behaviours and take great pride in achieving a 'Power of Purple' award which recognises consistently good behaviour.

Pupils are not concerned about bullying because they know that it is rare and that, when it does occur, it is swiftly and effectively dealt with. They learn to understand and manage their own behaviour and emotions. The coloured 'zones of regulation' help pupils to talk about their feelings so that they are ready to learn.

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

Leaders have developed an ambitious and interesting curriculum for all pupils. They have successfully taken into account pupils' various starting points and experiences, including those who speak English as an additional language. The provision for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) is strong. The curriculum is equally ambitious for these pupils as it is for others. Leaders identify the needs of pupils with SEND, including in the early years, accurately. Teachers skilfully adapt their lessons so that all pupils can access the full curriculum and achieve well. Pupils are enthusiastic learners and enjoy the challenges they are given.

Subject leaders provide expert guidance and support for staff. They ensure that teachers are skilled, with strong subject knowledge. Teachers check pupils' understanding to inform their teaching and make adjustments to meet pupils' needs. In a small number of subjects, the most important knowledge that pupils need to learn to achieve highly is not as clear as it could be. Leaders recognise this and are clear about their plans to strengthen this.

Reading is a high priority. Reading for enjoyment is promoted throughout the school. There is an unwavering determination that all pupils at South Borough will learn to read. As soon as children start in the early years, they are encouraged to develop a love of books, story, rhyme and song. Phonics skills are taught effectively through a consistent approach and a confidently delivered, well-structured programme. Children quickly learn letters and new sounds and enjoy learning.

Well-resourced classrooms and outdoor areas encourage the development of initial reading skills. Pupils read books that match the sounds they know so they become more confident and fluent readers. Pupils who are falling behind are given additional help to catch up quickly so they can continue to learn with their peers. Teachers read aloud regularly in all classes and introduce pupils to a wide range of diverse and quality texts and poetry. Pupils develop as confident, fluent readers who have the skills to access the wider curriculum.

Leaders are resolute that pupils have opportunities to broaden their experiences beyond their immediate environment and culture. These include clubs, trips and visitors to school. Reflecting the views of many, one parent said, 'I think the school does an awful lot for the children, regardless of their background, to develop their understanding of the world around them.'

Leaders ensure that the school is inclusive and a place where all pupils can learn without interruption. Teachers quickly refocus any pupils who lose concentration. Attendance has improved and the number of exclusions has dramatically reduced as a result of the new behaviour strategies. Pupils are exceptionally respectful, understanding and accepting of others with different beliefs, backgrounds, cultures or ways of learning. A group agreed that, 'We should all be treated fairly even if we are different.'

The headteacher has created a strong team of dedicated leaders and staff. Leaders are considerate of staff workload and mindful of this when making significant changes. All staff, including those at the start of their careers, feel highly valued and supported. They appreciate the care leaders show for their well-being. Trust leaders and governors know the school well. They work closely with school leaders to continue to improve the school, providing effective support and challenge.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

There is a strong culture of safeguarding in this school. Staff receive regular training and know pupils very well. They are quick to recognise any signs that a pupil might be at risk of harm. Staff are rigorous in sharing concerns and leaders take swift action to respond to them. Leaders are tenacious in their work with external agencies to ensure that pupils get the right help at the right time. Record-keeping and recruitment checks are robust. Pupils are taught how to keep themselves safe, including when they are online. Governors and the trust have clear oversight of safeguarding.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In a small number of foundation subjects, the end points that the curriculum is building towards are not clearly defined. Therefore, the knowledge and skills that pupils need to retain to reach those end points are not always sufficiently clear or precise. This means that pupils do not always achieve as well as they might in these areas. Leaders should identify and clarify the ambitious end points that they want pupils to achieve and strengthen the impact of assessment in these subjects to support this.

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 school to be good in January 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	141650
Local authority	Kent
Inspection number	10256525
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	509
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Paul Goodson
Headteacher	Mathew Currie
Website	www.southboroughprimary.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	16 and 17 January 2018, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The headteacher was the head of school from October 2020. He became the substantive headteacher in October 2022.
- The school does not currently use any 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 her evaluation of the school.
- The inspector met with the headteacher and the deputy and assistant headteachers. She also met with other senior leaders, including the special educational needs coordinator, and staff.
- The inspector met with members of the trust and the local governing board.
- The inspector carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics and art. For each deep dive, the inspector met with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, talked to some pupils and looked at samples of pupils' work.

- The inspector also looked at curriculum information in other subjects and observed some pupils reading to teaching assistants.
- To inspect safeguarding, the inspector spoke with leaders, staff and pupils. She looked at the single central record of recruitment checks and safeguarding records. Throughout the inspection, the inspector considered and checked the culture of safeguarding within the school.
- The inspector reviewed a range of documentation, including the school strategic plan and the school's own evaluation of its effectiveness.
- The inspector observed pupils' behaviour in lessons, at lunchtimes and around the school. She talked to pupils about their learning and gathered pupils' views about what behaviour is like and whether they feel safe in school.
- The inspector considered the responses from Ofsted's online surveys for staff, pupils and parents.

Inspection team

Margaret Coussins, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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