

Inspection of a good school: Smarden Primary School

Pluckley Road, Smarden, Ashford, Kent TN27 8ND

Inspection dates: 10 and 11 May 2023

Outcome

Smarden Primary School continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

All at Smarden Primary have the highest aspirations and ambition for all their pupils. Pupils benefit from this ambition and the thorough approach to everything in school. They are happy and do well in their academic and wider development.

Pupils rise to the high expectations and focus well on their learning. They enjoy the engaging curriculum that has been planned by leaders with the pupils' needs and interests in mind. Pupils are proud of their school and the wider opportunities that they have to develop as individuals. Older pupils in particular speak with confidence about this and how it prepares them well for the future.

Pupils behave well. They are courteous, polite and interested in other people. Right from Nursery, pupils learn the importance of showing respect for each other. They listen carefully to ideas and hold conversations with consideration of different views. Pupils are happy at school, whether in lessons or at playtime. These are joyful occasions where they play well together, with pupils from all year groups joining in considerately. Pupils generally behave well in class and there is little bullying. Pupils feel safe. They trust all adults in school, and this enables them all to thrive.

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

Leaders ensure there is high ambition within the curriculum for all pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Staff have wide subject knowledge, supported through a comprehensive training programme. Teachers plan for pupils to 'discover, explore and create' by making opportunities to learn key knowledge and skills and to be fascinated by what they learn.

The curriculum for pupils in the majority of subjects is extremely well thought out and sequenced. Where learning is planned from Nursery, the progression from early years to Year 1 is extremely effective. Currently, not all learning is planned from the very beginning

of school. In these cases, pupils are not as well prepared for their next steps as they could be.

Teachers use assessment well in many subjects to enable them to build on pupils' prior learning in order to move them on from lesson to lesson as well as over time. This information also enables staff to identify any pupils falling behind or for whom an additional need is becoming apparent. This is not fully embedded across the whole curriculum. Consequently, teachers cannot build accurately on pupils' prior learning in these few subjects.

Pupils achieve highly. This is especially true in reading where all pupils read widely and enjoy books and stories. Both the love of reading and the teaching of reading begin from children's first days in Nursery. Pupils at the early stages of reading are supported well through the phonics programme and carefully planned interventions. They become fluent and confident readers by the time they move to key stage 2. Pupils with SEND have their needs met through early identification and swift intervention either in or out of class. Teachers are skilled in adapting activities to meet the needs of all.

Pupils behave well overall in lessons. While pupils are not disrupted by their classmates, there are a very small number of pupils who lose focus in their learning. Staff bring pupils back to the task at hand quickly, ensuring that minimal learning time is lost. Children's behaviour in the early years classes is particularly strong. The clearly established routines mean that children move between activities smoothly and the atmosphere is calm and purposeful.

Leaders have approached pupils' broader development with the same strategic approach. Nothing is left to chance here. The 'discover explore create' vision feeds into wider aspects of school life. Pupils benefit from the opportunity to go on trips, have visitors or virtual visits to school, and take part in community events. Pupils are proud to hold positions of leadership in school, such as safeguarding champions, house captains, online safety leaders, lunchtime leaders or members of the eco council.

The curriculum for personal, social, health and economic education (including relationships and sex education) is a strong part of school life and is considered an integral part of pupils' development. Pupils talk of learning about ways to behave, thinking about possible consequences of behaviour, and how people are different. They are thoughtful and reflective and are prepared well for life in modern Britain.

Staff share leaders' ambition and unwavering high expectations. Staff are very positive about the support that are also given. Pupils thrive here, regardless of circumstance. As one parent described it: 'A wonderful village school that promotes hard work, confidence, kindness and mindfulness.'

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Safeguarding practices are secure, including safer recruitment of staff. All staff and designated safeguarding leads are confident in identifying a variety of concerns and no concern is ever considered too small. Pupils trust the staff to take their worries seriously and to act on them.

Information is kept carefully and used well to help secure required support, including from external agencies.

All staff are knowledgeable in what to look out for to keep pupils safe. They undertake regular and frequent training in this. Pupils are taught how to identify risks and how to keep themselves safe in different contexts, for example online.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Assessment is not fully effective across the curriculum. Where it is weaker, it is difficult for teachers to build on pupils' prior learning because they do not know exactly what that is. Leaders need to continue their work to ensure that staff have the knowledge to use assessment well across the curriculum.
- Learning is not joined up fully for children moving from Nursery to Reception and onwards. This means that children are not fully prepared for their next steps. Leaders need to ensure that Nursery and Reception staff have secure knowledge of what children learn at each stage in every area of learning so that they can build on this effectively.

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 March 2013.

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	137529
Local authority	Kent
Inspection number	10256505
Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	2 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	161
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trustees	Gaenor Anne Bagley
Headteacher	Claudia Miller
Website	www.smardenprimaryschool.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	5 December 2017, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school is part of The Kemnal Academies Trust multi-academy trust. The headteacher and the chair of the local governing body have been appointed since the last inspection.
- The school has nursery provision for two-year-olds.
- The school runs its own breakfast and after-school provision.
- 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, the deputy headteacher, subject leaders and a range of staff. She also met with the chair and the vice chair of the local governing body, and a representative from the multi-academy trust.
- The inspector carried out deep dives in early reading, mathematics and history. For each deep dive, the inspector 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 pupil's work. She also heard pupils reading.

- The inspector reviewed a range of the school's documentation, including school improvement documentation and minutes of governing body meetings.
- The inspector also observed pupils' behaviour in lessons and outside during social times. She spoke with a range of pupils throughout the inspection to gather their views.
- The inspector reviewed the arrangements for safeguarding by scrutinising documentation and sampling safeguarding records. She also spoke to staff and governors.
- The inspector considered the views of parents and carers shared through Ofsted Parent View and from discussion with some at the school gate. The inspector gathered the views of staff through surveys and discussions conducted throughout the inspection.

Inspection team

Kate Owbridge, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
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M1 2WD

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