

Inspection of a good school: Fairmead School

Mudford Road, Yeovil, Somerset BA21 4NZ

Inspection dates:

13 and 14 June 2023

Outcome

Fairmead School continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils at Fairmead enjoy coming to their school and attend regularly. Staff know the pupils exceptionally well. This means that from the moment pupils start school, whether in the early years or later, staff care for and nurture them well. As one parent said, 'My child has thrived and is eager to come to school.'

Staff support pupils extremely well in managing their emotions and promoting positive behaviours. As a result, there have been significant improvements in pupils' behaviour. Pupils are clear about what leaders expect of them. They know the difference between right and wrong. Pupils understand that leaders do not tolerate bullying of any kind. They know who to talk to if they have any worries or concerns. Pupils are confident that staff will deal quickly with any incidents of unkind behaviour. This means they feel safe during their time in school.

Pupils are enthusiastic about their learning and work hard. They are keen to share their future aspirations. However, leaders recognise that, in some subjects, the curriculum is not planned well enough to enable pupils to achieve as well as they could. Plans are in development, but many are in their early stages.

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

The headteacher is resolute in her determination to do what is right for pupils. She conveys keenly that pupils are what matter most. Everything staff do is about helping pupils realise their aspirations and achieve success. As one member of staff commented, 'The child is at the centre of everything we do.' Pupils display positive attitudes to their learning and want to do well.

Leaders demonstrate a determination that pupils will gain the knowledge and skills they need to live life to the full. Older pupils relish the opportunity to hone their skills through

carefully planned and purposeful work experience. Pupils across the school have a wealth of opportunities to develop their entrepreneurial skills. They engage in making products to sell, such as sensory toys, candles and jewellery. Pupils take pride in selling their products in, for example, pop-up shops. They use the funds to enhance the school, such as buying playground equipment. These and other experiences develop pupils' personal and social skills. They are well prepared for their next steps.

Leaders work hard to ensure that pupils learn from a well-planned and sequenced curriculum. However, they are aware that there is further work to be undertaken. In some subjects, leaders are not clear enough about the knowledge and skills they want pupils to know. As a result, pupils do not build a deep understanding of these subjects.

Leaders recognise the importance of developing ways to promote communication for pupils. For example, staff use bespoke communication books for each pupil. However, wider communication strategies for pupils are underdeveloped. This hampers pupils' ability to communicate effectively, which impacts their learning.

Reading is a priority at Fairmead. Leaders are ambitious that every pupil will become, at the very least, a functional reader. Pupils in the earliest stages of learning to read have daily phonics sessions. Staff support pupils well to help strengthen their phonic knowledge. Pupils read daily to improve their fluency and comprehension. There is a wide selection of books across the school and in the library. Leaders select texts with care to ensure they are age and stage appropriate. These books develop in pupils a love of reading.

Pupils' wider development is central to the school's work. Leaders plan with care how they provide pupils with the knowledge and skills they need to lead purposeful and successful lives within their communities. Pupils build knowledge of how to keep healthy and lead safe and active lives. They demonstrate an understanding and respect for different faiths, cultures, types of families and relationships.

Pupils have access to high-quality careers guidance. Leaders are aspirational for their pupils. They believe pupils at Fairmead should have the same experiences as their peers in mainstream schools. Pupils told inspectors how they want to be engineers or firefighters. Pupils are clear on the pathways they need to follow in order to fulfil their ambitions.

Staff, including those new to the profession, feel well supported by leaders. They welcome the training and guidance they receive and appreciate that leaders are mindful of their workload.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders create a strong safeguarding culture. They ensure that keeping pupils safe is everyone's responsibility. Staff know what to do if they think a pupil is at risk. Leaders make timely and well-informed decisions. They work closely with other agencies and are

not afraid to challenge decisions made to ensure pupils are safe. Governors regularly check the effectiveness of the school's work, including safer recruitment procedures.

Pupils learn how to keep themselves safe, including healthy relationships. They know that adults will listen and provide support to them if they have any concerns.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In some subjects, leaders are not clear enough about the knowledge and skills they want pupils to know. As a result, pupils do not build a deep understanding of these subjects. Leaders must ensure that they identify the knowledge and skills pupils need to learn as they progress through the school in all subjects.
- Communication strategies for pupils are underdeveloped. This hampers pupils' ability to communicate effectively, which impacts on their learning. Leaders must ensure that staff develop the expertise in wider communication strategies to enable pupils to better access their learning.

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 February 2014.

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	123940
Local authority	Somerset
Inspection number	10269137
Type of school	Special
School category	Community special
Age range of pupils	4 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	144
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	0
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Amanda Purchase
Headteacher	Tracy Felstead
Website	www.fairmeadschool.com
Date of previous inspection	28 February 2018, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- Fairmead is a special school for pupils with moderate learning difficulties and autism spectrum disorder.
- The school has undergone significant expansion since the last inspection, with an additional six classes. Consequently, there has been a considerable growth in the number of staff working at the school.
- The school uses two unregistered alternative providers.

Information about this inspection

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed any continued impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.

- Inspectors met with the headteacher, head of school, senior leaders, staff and three members of the governing body.
- The lead inspector held a telephone conversation with a representative from Somerset local authority.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics and physical education. For each deep dive, the 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.
- The lead inspector listened to a selection of pupils in Years 2 to 11 read to an adult.
- Inspectors reviewed the school's safeguarding documentation, including the safeguarding checks carried out on staff working at the school. They considered how well the designated safeguarding leader acts on concerns about pupils' welfare and safety. Inspectors talked to pupils, staff and governors about how the school keeps everyone safe.
- The lead inspector considered key documentation, including the school improvement and development plan.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour in lessons and around the school site. The lead inspector met with leaders to discuss and scrutinise how they respond to behaviour incidents.
- Inspectors considered the responses to the online survey, Ofsted Parent View, including free-text replies and responses to the staff and pupil surveys. The lead inspector held a telephone conversation with a parent.

Inspection team

Jen Southall, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Claire Thomson

Ofsted Inspector

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