

# Inspection of Rookery School

Rookery Road, Handsworth, Birmingham, West Midlands B21 9PY

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Inspection dates: 21 to 22 June 2023

## **Overall effectiveness**

**Good**

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The quality of education

**Good**

Behaviour and attitudes

**Good**

Personal development

**Outstanding**

Leadership and management

**Good**

Early years provision

**Outstanding**

Previous inspection grade

Good

## **What is it like to attend this school?**

Pupils achieve very well at Rookery school thanks to a well-designed curriculum, and a significant range of wider opportunities. Leaders have created a culture where the school values are woven into the fabric of daily life. All pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), enjoy many enrichment opportunities. These are carefully selected and closely link to the curriculum. For example, all pupils learn an instrument during their time at the school, attend a wide range of sports clubs and choir, and take part in trips without charge. Pupils relish these visits that help bring learning to life. They especially enjoy the visit to Stratford-on-Avon to act as guides.

Pupils' behaviour in classrooms and around the school fully represents the school's values. This means that the school is a harmonious community. Pupils understand that adults will help them if they have any problems. Leaders are aware that, despite their efforts, some pupils do not attend regularly enough.

Pupils work hard and enjoy learning thanks to a thoughtfully constructed curriculum that is closely centred on literacy. A systematic approach to early reading means that pupils are well placed to make strong progress in the curriculum.

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

In early years, children make a strong start to their learning. Leaders' aim is for the children to be academically and personally ready to start key stage 1. The early years curriculum is constructed to enable children to make progress in all areas of learning. While there is strong creative element to the curriculum, there is a tight focus on children developing their speaking, reading, writing and mathematical knowledge and skills. As a result, children, including those who are disadvantaged and those with SEND, make strong progress in the early years foundation stage and are well prepared to enter Year 1.

Leaders have embedded a thorough and effective approach to teaching phonics. Children are taught phonics right from the start of Reception. They quickly gain the knowledge and skills they need to become confident readers. Well-trained staff deliver the phonics programme well. They spot children who have fallen behind and help them catch up quickly, thanks to careful use of assessment. Older pupils understand the importance of reading widely and often and talked extensively with inspectors about their favourite books.

Leaders have designed the curriculum in key stages 1 and 2 to ensure that 'everything starts with a book'. This means that every curriculum theme is matched with an appropriate high-quality text. Teachers are skilled in delivering the curriculum to match leaders' expectations and, as a result, pupils speak eloquently about their learning. Where the curriculum is less effective, leaders' plans have not

been implemented fully, which means there is sometimes some variety in the quality of delivery. Leaders regularly review the curriculum and are aware of its strengths and areas for development. Pupils in the Autism Spectrum Condition (ASC) Resource Base are supported well to access the school's curriculum in full thanks to expert teaching, and carefully targeted support. These pupils thrive thanks to leaders' ambitious support for them.

Staff have high expectations for pupils' behaviour and conduct. As one pupil said, 'We are like a family and get on well together.' The expectations are understood and consistently applied. This is reflected in pupils' behaviour and leads to a calm and orderly learning environment. Bullying is not tolerated and is dealt with effectively. Peer mediators, who have received high-quality training from the learning-mentor, are effectively engaged in managing the rare low-level disputes. Pupils' attitudes to learning are positive, they are proud of their work and their contribution to school life. Pupils behave very well in classrooms and at social times, clearly in line with leaders' expectations.

Leaders have worked with families to ensure all are aware of the importance of every child attending school every day. These efforts have had positive results in improving overall attendance rates. That said, there are groups of pupils who are still not attending as regularly as they should, especially disadvantaged pupils. Leaders are aware of the need to close this gap, such that all pupils experience continuity in their education.

Leaders' offer for developing pupils' personal development is exceptional. They have planned an approach that ensures the curriculum goes beyond ambitious academic expectations. This ensures that all pupils, including those who are disadvantaged, enjoy a rich set of experiences. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural provision is of high quality, enabling pupils to be reflective about their own beliefs, building a well-informed knowledge and understanding of different faiths, feelings and values.

Leaders have an ambitious vision for the school and all pupils. This is put in place thanks to policies that are well understood by staff. Where leaders have identified that their provision is less secure, they are taking appropriate action to rectify this. Governors are exceptionally well informed and equally ambitious for the school. They review the school's outcomes and expenditure carefully, and direct funds appropriately to support leaders.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Keeping children safe is a high priority for leaders. There is a strong culture of vigilance around safeguarding. Staff are well trained and understand how to spot and report any concerns that they may have about a pupil. The school's tenacious and experienced safeguarding team knows pupils very well. They are determined to get the best support for children and their families. The safeguarding team liaises with external partners whenever necessary. Leaders make sure that recruitment

checks on adults are thorough and take timely action in case of concerns. Pupils learn about managing risks and possible dangers.

## **What does the school need to do to improve?**

### **(Information for the school and appropriate authority)**

- Despite leaders' efforts, absence remains high for too many pupils, especially those who are disadvantaged. As a result, these pupils have a fractured experience of education, which adversely affects their academic achievement and opportunity to take part in the enriched curriculum. Leaders should continue to work with parents to put in place effective strategies that result in improved attendance at school for all pupils.
- The curriculum is not yet fully embedded in a few subjects. This means that not all teachers deliver the curriculum to the same high standard that leaders expect. Leaders should ensure that staff continue to receive targeted professional development to allow them to deliver the intended curriculum successfully in all subjects.

## **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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	137168
<b>Local authority</b>	Birmingham
<b>Inspection number</b>	10268945
<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Academy converter
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3 to 11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	462
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	Board of trustees
<b>Chair of trust</b>	Karandeep Sehra
<b>Headteacher</b>	Emma Balan
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.rookeryschool.co.uk">www.rookeryschool.co.uk</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	1 February 2018

## Information about this school

- The headteacher has been in post since January 2016.
- The school runs a specialist provision for pupils on the autism spectrum (the ASC Resource Base).
- The school runs breakfast and after-school clubs.
- The school does not use any 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. The inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors met with school leaders, the chair of the governing body and two other members of the governing body. Inspectors also visited the Autistic Spectrum Condition Resource Base.

- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, art and design, English, mathematics and science. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. Inspectors also considered some other subjects through a range of inspection activities.
- To inspect safeguarding, a meeting was held with the leader with responsibility for safeguarding, the inspectors looked at records of leaders' communications with outside agencies, and they considered relevant aspects of the curriculum.
- Inspectors looked at the responses to Ofsted's online surveys completed by parents, and staff. Inspectors also looked at responses to surveys carried out by the school. Inspectors spoke to parents at the school gate and considered correspondence received by Ofsted from parents.

### **Inspection team**

Andrew Madden, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Mike Onyon	Ofsted Inspector
Jo Evans	His Majesty's Inspector

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