

Inspection of Smeeth Community Primary School

Caroland Close, Smeeth, Ashford, Kent TN25 6RX

Inspection dates: 3 and 4 July 2023

Overall effectiveness	Good
The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Outstanding
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Good
Early years provision	Outstanding
Previous inspection grade	Requires improvement

What is it like to attend this school?

Smeeth Community Primary School has a strong community feel which is shared by leaders, staff, pupils, parents and carers alike. As a small school, pupils and their families are known especially well and they benefit from these positive relationships. Pupils take responsibility for making their school inclusive and welcoming to all. They talk confidently about the school values of compassion, tolerance, respect, positivity, honesty and perseverance.

Pupils behave exceptionally well and with high levels of self-control. They are proud to earn rewards such as house points, be recognised as 'star of the week' or receive 'well done vouchers' for demonstrating good manners or embodying the school values. Pupils are motivated to hold positions of responsibility in the school, including being sports captains, members of the school council, librarians and buddies for younger children. They take their responsibilities seriously and talk about what they do to improve school for themselves and their peers. For example, the school council recently introduced 'picnic Fridays' so that the whole school can eat together outside when the weather is fine.

Pupils of all ages are self-assured and articulate, speaking with confidence and humour to visitors. They feel safe and can talk about how to keep themselves safe both online and in the wider world.

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

Leaders have taken decisive action since the previous inspection. They have planned an ambitious curriculum across subjects which identifies the important knowledge and skills that pupils need to know. This runs from the early years upwards, and there are especially thoughtful connections between what children study in Reception to what they will encounter as they progress through the school. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are carefully considered in drawing up curriculum plans. Staff make appropriate adaptations to teaching to ensure that pupils with SEND are supported to access the same learning as their peers. Leaders provide personalised approaches where these needs are greater, supporting pupils well to develop in their learning. As a result, pupils achieve well.

Early reading is taught very effectively in the school. Children are engaged and excited by their phonics sessions and are relentless in their desire to get things right. Staff have the expertise to pick up on any misconceptions quickly, and challenge children to 'have another try'. This develops children's resilience and they are determined to persevere where they find things more challenging.

Across lessons, staff check what pupils have understood well and use questions to identify anything that needs to be corrected. Staff monitor the work that pupils produce and, in mathematics and English especially, they pick up on any misconceptions quickly so that they do not persist. In some foundation subjects, however, this assessment is not as precise as it could be.

Pupils are engaged by their learning and across the school can talk confidently about what they have been taught. At times, they cannot always remember this learning longer term. Leaders have rightly identified this as an area they need to develop further.

The learning environment across the school is positive and welcoming. Displays are used well to support pupils, for example, in remembering key sounds in reading and acting as prompts for children. Reading is prioritised through the school and there are inviting book corners in each classroom, as well as an outside library to encourage reading further. The indoor library is also a well-used hub that pupils enjoy visiting.

The early years provision in this school is exceptionally strong. Children benefit from a range of well-planned activities that are carefully designed to support their learning, as well as engage their interest. They can work with increasing independence and explain their learning to others well, proud to show what they have achieved. Adults are expert in making learning opportunities out of small moments, so that children continually benefit from opportunities to think and grow.

Leaders give careful thought to what pupils need to know beyond the classroom and plan opportunities to develop their wider knowledge of the world. Recently, pupils have met with teenage refugees from Afghanistan and been able to talk to them about their experiences. Pupils also talk confidently about what they have learned from the recent 'international week'. There are a range of sporting opportunities on offer which pupils enjoy. They enthuse about the forest school and the chance they have to learn about nature, work together in teams and build dens. This is something that leaders are passionate that all pupils get to benefit from and ensure that the most disadvantaged pupils benefit from significantly.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

There is an effective culture of safeguarding at the school. Staff receive appropriate training which is regularly updated, meaning that they know how to identify and refer any pupils who might be at risk. They know their pupils well and there are detailed records kept of any concerns. Concerns are acted on quickly, and leaders liaise well with external agencies as needed.

Leaders complete appropriate checks to ensure that adults are safe to work with children. Governors know their safeguarding responsibilities and hold leaders to account.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Assessment in the foundation subjects is not as precise as it needs to be. This means that staff do not always have an accurate understanding of what pupils have understood or pick up on subject specific misconceptions quickly enough. Leaders need to ensure that staff develop their assessment practices so that, in the way that they do in reading and mathematics, they can identify what pupils know and where they need to develop.
- Leaders have identified the small steps of component knowledge and skills in each of their curriculum plans. However, there is not yet in place a systematic process for supporting pupils to retain their learning over time. Leaders need to develop systems to support pupils to connect their learning and retain this in the longer term.

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	118381
Local authority	Kent
Inspection number	10268310
Type of school	Primary
School category	Foundation
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	130
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	James Dearden
Headteacher	Jennifer Payne
Website	www.smeeth.kent.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	18 and 19 September 2019, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Information about this school

- The school does not currently use any alternative provision.
- The school is a member of the CARE Foundation Trust.

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. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors held meetings with the headteacher, senior leaders, teachers and pupils. The lead inspector met with the members of the governing body, including the chair of governors. The lead inspector also held a telephone conversation with a representative from the local authority.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics, geography 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. The lead inspector listened to some pupils read to adults they knew.

- To inspect safeguarding, inspectors held meetings with safeguarding leaders, the governing body, teachers and pupils. They scrutinised the single central record and checked safeguarding records.
- The inspection team took account of a range of other information, including the school's development plans, school policies and governor minutes.
- The inspection team spoke with pupils about their experience of the school. They also took account of parent and carer and staff views through conversations and responses to Ofsted's surveys.

Inspection team

Marian Feeley, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Mark Enser

His Majesty's Inspector

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