

Inspection of a good school: Friars Grove Primary School

Upland Drive, Colchester, Essex CO4 0PZ

Inspection dates:

11 and 12 July 2023

Outcome

Friars Grove Primary School continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are deeply aware of the high expectations of behaviour set by leaders in the 'Friars Grove way'. Pupils portray the values of ambition, integrity and respect in their attitudes and behaviour in school.

Pupils enjoy learning in lessons and are eager to collaborate with their peers to complete their work to a high standard. Pupils say that everyone understands the consequences of poor behaviour. They state that incidents of bullying are rare. Pupils are confident that teachers deal with their concerns very quickly. Therefore, pupils feel '100%' safe at school.

There is a varied range of clubs at the school for pupils to attend that they might not otherwise experience. These include ukulele, junk modelling, wildlife, cake decoration and sports and dance clubs. They enhance pupils' classroom learning and contribute to their wider cultural development.

Pupils feel strongly that they have a voice in the school. For example, the eco councillors suggested changes to reduce plastic pollution at school. Leaders have happily adopted their proposals.

Pupils are very active in the local community, visiting local care homes and raising money for charity. They regularly take part in the Colchester lantern parade at Christmas and have also participated in the local zoo's 60th anniversary celebrations. Pupils painted stones of their favourite animals or memories of the zoo, which are now on show in the zoo's commemorative garden. These activities help pupils prepare to be effective citizens in modern Britain.

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

Leaders commit to their vision of 'growing minds and hearts for a whole world of opportunities' through the curriculum. This means that the curriculum is ambitious for all pupils in terms of both their academic achievement and wider development.

Leaders place an absolute priority on pupils learning to read. They have ensured that staff are experts in delivering phonics. Children begin to learn phonics immediately they start in Reception. Teachers closely track their progress from the beginning. This way, teachers can quickly put in place the most appropriate support to help them catch up.

Teachers make sure that pupils take home books that are matched to the sounds that they know. Teachers ensure that pupils only move on to more complex books when they are ready. As a result, all pupils quickly learn to read.

Leaders are proactive in encouraging parents to support their child to become a confident, fluent reader. This includes phonics workshops and a range of supportive resources on the school's website.

Leaders have mapped the whole curriculum for all year groups across topics of study. Individual subject content is planned to provide an appropriate level of challenge for pupils. This subject content is then delivered to build on pupils' earlier learning. As a result, pupils successfully build links between concepts and themes in different subject areas. New learning is mostly matched very well to pupils' prior learning. On occasion, teachers do not adapt their teaching as well as they might. As a result, some pupils do not always achieve as highly as they could.

Leaders quickly identify pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). They ensure that appropriate adaptations are in place for these pupils. For example, an increasing number of pupils are presenting with social and emotional difficulties. Leaders have ensured that staff have the appropriate training and skills to support them. Leaders are tenacious in seeking the relevant support from external agencies when they identify such a need.

Leaders place a high priority on developing pupils' readiness for their future lives. This includes pupils learning about a range of other cultures and faiths through the curriculum. As a result, pupils show strong social awareness in readiness for their roles as citizens.

Leaders have ensured that pupils have a very high sense of moral responsibility. This is evident in the focus on exploring moral issues within the curriculum. This includes debating land use both at home and abroad, as well as historical issues, such as slavery. Pupils display this moral duty in their own behaviour and the respect they show to others.

Leaders provide a range of leadership opportunities for pupils. These leadership roles include applying to be school councillors, eco councillors, play leaders and play buddies. Pupils are proud to take on these roles and take them very seriously. For example, the play leaders take great care in choosing lunchtime games for younger children. The eco

council are highly proactive in protecting the environment within the school and local community.

Staff feel that leaders are always mindful of their workload. They feel that leaders are supportive and are attentive to their well-being. The members of the governing body have a realistic and precise view of the impact of the work of school leaders.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders have ensured that staff are knowledgeable about identifying the signs of potential abuse. Staff respond quickly and appropriately in identifying and reporting concerns. Leaders follow up on these concerns and liaise efficiently with external agencies as required. This also includes the reporting and managing of allegations against staff.

Leaders make sure that all adults in the school are fully vetted as being suitable to work with children.

Pupils say that they always feel safe at school. They have a mature understanding of a number of risks, including online and radicalisation. Pupils are confident to report any concerns they may have to an adult in school.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In a few subjects, pupils' knowledge is not yet sufficiently challenged for them to make as much progress as they might. This means that some pupils who are capable of achieving more do not learn as much as they could. Leaders should make sure that teachers ensure all pupils are stretched to achieve as well as they can.

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 the school to be good in October 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	114761
Local authority	Essex
Inspection number	10288436
Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	5 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	408
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Rod Goody
Headteacher	Susan Shipp
Website	www.friarsgroveprimaryschool.com/
Date of previous inspection	22 February 2018, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- Abacus Nursery is located on the same site as the school.
- Leaders work in an informal partnership with leaders from four local primary schools.
- Leaders do not currently use any alternative provision.
- Leaders oversee staff providing childcare for pupils who attend the school, including a breakfast club and after-school club.

Information about this inspection

The lead inspector conducted this ungraded inspection under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. The lead inspector discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and has taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.

- The lead inspector held meetings with leaders, including the headteacher, deputy headteacher, special educational needs coordinator and members of the local governing body.
- The lead inspector carried out deep dives in the following subjects: early reading, mathematics and geography. For each deep dive, the inspector met with subject leaders, looked at curriculum plans, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. The lead inspector also listened to a sample of pupils read to a familiar adult.
- The lead inspector reviewed the arrangements for safeguarding by scrutinising safeguarding records and policies, meeting separately with leaders and governors, and holding separate discussions with staff and pupils.
- The lead inspector observed pupils' behaviour in lessons and outside during social times.
- The lead inspector viewed a range of the school's documentation provided at the start of the inspection, including the school improvement plan and minutes from meetings of the governing body.
- The lead inspector took account of the views expressed via surveys, including Ofsted Parent View.

Inspection team

Rowena Simmons, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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