

Inspection of a good school: The Fitch Green Academy

Tanton Road, Little Dunmow, Dunmow, Essex CM6 3GG

Inspection dates:

11 and 12 July 2023

Outcome

There has been no change to this school's overall judgement of good as a result of this ungraded (section 8) inspection. However, the evidence gathered suggests that the inspection grade might not be as high if a graded (section 5) inspection were carried out now. Inspectors are recommending the next inspection to be a graded inspection.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils say that Fitch Green Academy is like belonging within a big family. Everyone is kind, and it is a safe and happy place to be. Pupils treat each other with respect and listen in class. Pupils understand and follow the behaviour expectations of staff. Pupils are quite clear: bullying is just not tolerated here. While rare, pupils say it can still happen, but staff sort it out immediately.

Pupils are positive in their attitudes towards learning. They appreciate that their work and successes are recognised by adults. Most pupils learn to read well. However, pupils do not develop a secure understanding of important facts and concepts in some subjects. Some pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) do not always get the support and help they need to learn important knowledge.

Pupils enjoy learning about values such as kindness, respect and positivity in personal, social and health education lessons. Passions and interests are nurtured through a range of opportunities. As such, pupils develop a sense of identity and knowledge of what makes them unique. One said, 'We learn that we are all unique in our own special way.'

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

In a short space of time, leaders have put in place effective practices that have improved behaviour and attendance. Pupils and staff alike appreciate this work.

Leaders have a clear view of where improvements are needed to the quality of education. As a result, work is under way to improve the quality of education for all pupils. Subject leaders are being supported to refine the curriculum to be coherent and ambitious. However, it is only in some areas of the curriculum, such as reading, that leaders have clearly identified the precise knowledge and vocabulary they want pupils to know and

remember. Where this is not identified, pupils have gaps in their knowledge. In some subjects, teachers check what pupils know without having precise information to check against. This means that leaders are not clear about how well pupils are achieving. Due to the inexperience of some subject leaders, they are sometimes unaware of how secure pupils' learning is. As a result, pupils do not do as well as they could.

The school has adopted a well-structured reading curriculum for pupils. Staff know exactly what pupils need to learn. Reading books closely match the sounds that pupils know, enabling pupils to develop their fluency effectively. Therefore, pupils learn to read well. When pupils fall behind, well-considered support is provided by adults who have secure subject knowledge. As a result, most pupils catch up. Pupils love to discuss the books on offer in the library and are enthusiastic about joining the reading 'millionaire board'.

Leaders are not quick enough to identify barriers to learning for pupils with SEND. The needs of these pupils are not always identified well. Leaders do not ensure that all pupils with SEND receive the support they need. Individualised support plans do not always include appropriate learning targets. As a result, some pupils with SEND do not build their knowledge securely over time and therefore do not achieve as well as they should.

Children in Reception enjoy their learning and play well with each other. The curriculum in early years clearly sets out the knowledge that pupils should learn in all areas. This results in children learning new knowledge that builds over time. Teachers carefully introduce vocabulary to help children develop their thinking. For example, teachers carefully introduce words like 'group' and 'total' to support children's mathematical thinking and knowledge. Children are well prepared for key stage 1.

Leaders have high expectations of pupils' behaviour. They have developed a clear behaviour policy and effective routines. There is a sense of calm around the school. Pupils identify the need to be friendly and polite to each other. Leaders celebrate the successes of good behaviour in assembly.

Leaders recognise the importance of supporting pupils' wider development. A range of clubs are provided. Leaders plan for pupils to explore the world outside Fritch Green, including through the much-loved outings to Hatfield Forest and Colchester Castle. There are many opportunities to develop responsibility, and older pupils love to be involved in these roles, for example as sports leaders, librarians, or as part of the media group.

Staff paint the picture of a supportive, approachable and highly regarded leadership and governance team. They speak highly of the ambition of leaders to further improve the school.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Staff have been trained well. They know what steps to take if they have any safeguarding concerns. Regular safeguarding updates help them to identify pupils who may be at risk of harm. If there are any concerns, leaders act quickly. They gain further advice from

outside agencies when needed. Leaders are rigorous in making recruitment checks on adults who work with pupils.

Pupils learn a range of ways to stay safe. They know how to be safe online and how to deal with cyber-bullying. Pupils know how to secure help if they have any worries.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Leaders have not set out the precise knowledge and vocabulary they want pupils to learn in all subjects. This means that pupils do not learn the full curriculum well. Many develop gaps in their knowledge because key content is missed. Leaders must set out clearly the important knowledge pupils need to learn, as they have in reading. Leaders must provide training to ensure that staff have sufficient subject knowledge to teach the whole curriculum well. Leaders must also ensure that staff check how well pupils learn and remember the curriculum.
- Some staff do not have the knowledge to identify accurately the barriers to learning that face the pupils with SEND. The support they receive is not always targeted with precision. This means that some pupils with SEND do not achieve well. Leaders must ensure that staff have the knowledge and skills needed to identify pupils' needs and adapt the curriculum so that all pupils achieve well.
- In some subjects, leaders do not have an accurate view of the quality of education that pupils are receiving, including for pupils with SEND. Leaders at all levels, including subject leaders, do not check well enough to assure themselves that all pupils are learning effectively. Leaders should provide training so that all leaders can monitor the quality of education 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 first ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be good in March 2018.

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	136441
Local authority	Essex
Inspection number	10288487
Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	278
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Co-chairs of trust	Emma Goodings and Jonathan Shakallis
Principal	Alex Burden
Website	www.theflitchgreenacademy.co.uk
Dates of previous inspection	6 and 7 March 2018, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- There have been a number of leadership and staff changes since the previous inspection. This includes where circumstances have led to different acting principals being in post.
- The principal joined the school in September 2022.
- The school does not use any alternative provision.
- The school has a breakfast and after-school club.

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 their evaluation of the school.
- The inspector carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics and physical education. 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 pupils' work.

- The inspector spoke with school leaders, subject leaders, parents, pupils, governors and a representative from the local authority.
- The inspector listened to pupils read to a trusted adult.
- To evaluate safeguarding, the inspector spoke to the designated safeguarding leader, staff, governors and pupils, and evaluated record-keeping and staff training.
- The inspector observed pupils' behaviour in lessons and around the school site. To gain the views of pupils, the inspector spoke to them formally and informally about the school.
- The inspector considered responses to Ofsted Parent View, Ofsted's online survey for parents. The inspector also considered responses to Ofsted's online surveys for staff.

Inspection team

Conor Heaven, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for children looked after, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

This publication is available at <http://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/>.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.gov.uk/ofsted

© Crown copyright 2023