

Inspection of an outstanding school: Seaford Head School

Arundel Road, Seaford, East Sussex BN25 4LX

Inspection dates:

15 to 16 November 2023

Outcome

Seaford Head School continues to be an outstanding school.

The headteacher of this school is Robert Ellis. The school is part of Seaford Learning Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Jon Dilley.

What is it like to attend this school?

This is a very inclusive school. Pupils feel proud to belong. Exciting, well-attended clubs and activities bring together pupils and students of different ages. The school makes sure that all groups are involved. This includes those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) and pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds.

An extremely high proportion of pupils stay on in education, employment or training after the age of 16. Older students take on extra responsibility. They help younger pupils in lessons and set an excellent example around the school. An impressive number of sixth-formers secure places in the most prestigious universities.

The school sets high standards for work and conduct. Staff make sure that everyone follows these. Behaviour in lessons is exemplary. The school's excellent pastoral team ensure that pupils are kept safe. Any incidents of bullying are picked up quickly. All this means that pupils can concentrate on their learning.

Consequently, results in public examinations are very strong, at key stage 4 and in the sixth form. The school prioritises the education and support for pupils with SEND and those from disadvantaged backgrounds to ensure they achieve exceptionally well.

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

The school benefits from very strong governance and dedicated leadership. It evaluates what works well and identifies what needs to be improved or refined. This is evident in

the precise actions taken to ensure all pupils achieve highly and are very well prepared for the next stage of their education.

There is a broad and ambitious curriculum at key stages 3 and 4. This lays an excellent foundation for high-quality courses on offer in the sixth form. Nearly all pupils now study a modern foreign language in key stage 4. The school is well on the way to meeting the government's national ambition for the English Baccalaureate to be at the heart of the curriculum.

Subject planning is meticulous. It draws on the latest research to help staff identify what pupils need to achieve highly. Topics are taught logically so each unit builds on earlier learning. Teachers make sure that pupils can remember key elements that they will need later. For instance, in languages, Year 7 pupils become fluent in the verbs that are used to form tenses in Year 9. In mathematics, Year 8 pupils learn basic techniques that come back in complex forms in Year 11. Teachers use their considerable subject expertise to check how much pupils have remembered and understood of each topic. They adapt their teaching accordingly. Pupils who need more support get a variety of useful resources that they can utilise.

Reading gets a very high priority. Pupils' reading ability is checked when they arrive. Well-designed reading programmes help any pupils who need to catch up. Teachers model reading for pleasure. Teachers in all subjects make sure they teach the specialist vocabulary that pupils will need. They teach pupils to develop their own distinctive writing styles. In the sixth form, this leads to some exceptionally strong extended writing.

Support for pupils with SEND has been considerably expanded and enhanced. Specialist staff support pupils' transition from primary school. They explore any special needs even before the pupils arrive in Year 7. Teachers monitor pupils' learning carefully to make sure any new individual needs are swiftly identified. The school has introduced a stimulating and effective course which they call 'Evolve'. This enables pupils to get extra support they need while continuing to learn successfully across the school's curriculum.

The school makes sure that its pupils attend regularly. Good attendance is encouraged and there are robust systems to monitor absence. Staff are understanding but resolute in the actions they take if pupils do not attend well. They seek imaginative solutions and bring in other agencies to help support pupils' attendance when it is needed.

This school is a harmonious community. Senior staff model the relationships that they want to see across the school. Teachers and support staff value the support they get. Pupils trust their teachers and sixth-form students have a high profile. A Year 12 student summed this up when he said that he would not have stayed in education post-16 had it not been for the care shown him by the school. Parents are overwhelmingly positive, describing the school as 'brilliant' and 'a breath of fresh air'.

Extra-curricular activities reinforce this sense of community. Pupils understand and talk about the importance of being citizens. Their curriculum covers moral and social issues to a high level. Pupils get excellent advice on careers and their possible next steps to help them pursue their ambitious career aspirations.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Background

When we have judged a school to be outstanding, we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains outstanding. 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 outstanding in September 2017.

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' is used to mean pupils with SEND; pupils who meet the [definition of children in need of help and protection](#); pupils receiving statutory local authority support from a social worker; and pupils who otherwise meet the criteria used for deciding the school's [pupil premium funding](#) (this includes pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years, looked after children (children in local authority care) and/or children who left care through adoption or another formal route).

School details

Unique reference number	138473
Local authority	East Sussex
Inspection number	10288027
Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	11 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1,447
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	210
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Jon Dilley
Headteacher	Robert Ellis
Website	www.seafordhead.org
Dates of previous inspection	13 and 14 September 2017, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school is part of Seaford Learning Trust.
- The school uses five registered providers of alternative provision for a very small number of pupils.
- The school also uses one unregistered provider of alternative provision for occasional temporary placements.
- The school meets the requirements of the provider access legislation, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 8 to 13 with information and engagement about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.

Information about this inspection

Inspections are a point-in-time judgement about the quality of a school's education provision.

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors met with the headteacher and other leaders during the inspection. The lead inspector also spoke by telephone to a representative of the local authority and to representatives of the alternative providers used by the school.
- The lead inspector met those responsible for governance, including the chair of the trust and the chair of the local governing body.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, mathematics, art, history and modern foreign languages. For each deep dive, inspectors held discussions about the curriculum, 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 also looked at pupils' work across a range of other subjects.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspectors: reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.
- The lead inspector scrutinised documents available on the school's website.
- Inspectors took note of the comments made by pupils, parents and staff in Ofsted's surveys.

Inspection team

Keith Pailthorpe, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Cathy Reid	Ofsted Inspector
Jon Chaloner	Ofsted Inspector

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