

Inspection of a good school: Plumberow Primary Academy

Hamilton Gardens, Hockley, Essex SS5 5BX

Inspection dates:

24 to 25 January 2024

Outcome

Plumberow Primary Academy continues to be a good school.

The principal of this school is Tom Bottrill. This school is part of the Academies Enterprise Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running this school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer, Rebecca Boomer-Clark, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by David Hall.

What is it like to attend this school?

Ambition and nurture are at the heart of the school. The values of 'ready, respectful, remarkable' shine through all aspects of school life. There are high aspirations for all pupils.

Behaviour is exemplary. In lessons, pupils are motivated to work hard and do their best. They pay close attention to their teachers and distractions are rare. Pupils who need extra help receive it from highly skilled adults. This helps them be successful. Pupils are polite, respectful and caring towards each other. There are harmonious relationships between everyone. Pupils trust adults to sort any issues fairly.

Pupils feel valued and safe at school because staff listen to them. There are a wide range of extra-curricular activities for pupils to enjoy. They include basketball, dodgeball, chess, craft, 'young voices' choir, cheerleading and many more. Pupils learn how to keep themselves healthy and stay physically fit. Many aspire to represent the school in sporting competitions. Pupils are eager to take on roles such as school councillors, junior leaders and reading leaders. They carry out their duties with pride. They look forward to the weekly celebration assemblies, where their achievements are celebrated.

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

The school has an accurate picture of its strengths and areas for improvement. Staff are very positive about the support they receive from leaders and the trust. They share leaders' passion for success. Parents are also very supportive of the school.

There is an ambitious curriculum which builds in a logical way across all year groups. Leaders have given careful thought to how pupils' learning builds over time. For example, in history pupils can talk in detail about what they have learned in previous years. The foundations of the curriculum start in Reception. Adults know what knowledge and skills children need to be ready for Year 1. Children develop their confidence and curiosity through play and exploring the environment. They are happy and enjoy working on focused activities with adults. They learn early number skills through games and pattern making. Children show high engagement, follow routines and cooperate with each other.

There is a positive reading culture across the school. Pupils have easy access to books, with well stocked 'book corners' in every classroom. They read books that are matched to their ability. Reception children learn to read right from the start. Adults deliver the phonics programme with precision and skill. Pupils use appropriate strategies to read unfamiliar words and develop their fluency. Teachers track progress and put in extra lessons for pupils who are at risk of falling behind. Older pupils also have daily reading lessons. They develop the skills they need to show they understand what they are reading.

The school is working hard to ensure that there is a consistent approach to teaching across all subjects. Teachers receive expert guidance and coaching to help them achieve this. In most subjects, what pupils should learn and when is set out in detail. This means teachers know what to teach and check, and can plan to revisit learning when needed. In mathematics, for example, parts of the curriculum are very clear. Teachers know what they want pupils to learn and they check this carefully. Where it is less clear, lessons can have too much content for pupils to remember. Teachers' checking of pupils' understanding is not precise. This leads to mistakes not being picked up.

The school is very inclusive. All pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), play a full part in school life. The school thinks carefully about all pupils' needs and how best to meet them. The school strives to ensure it is a positive experience for everyone. They work closely with families whose children struggle to attend. There is lots of support to bring about improved attendance. There are strong systems in place to identify and assess the needs of pupils with SEND. Teachers receive detailed information about how to support them effectively. This helps them make progress from their starting points.

Pupils have positive attitudes towards all aspects of the school. It is a safe place for them to thrive. They always behave well. They learn how to stay safe online and the importance of well-being. Pupils learn about equality and the protected characteristics. They know it is okay to be different. Studying high profile figures like Rosie Jones helps their understanding. Kindness, caring and resilience are traits that start in Reception. Pupils build on these throughout school to become empathetic, mature and reflective children.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In some subjects, the most important knowledge or concept pupils need to learn is not always set out in detail. This means teachers are not always clear about what they should be teaching or when they should be checking that pupils have understood. Pupils often repeat mistakes that have not been picked up and develop misconceptions. The school should make sure every subject sets out exactly what the most important knowledge or skills are so that teachers know they must prioritise teaching and checking these concepts, knowledge and skills.

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 judged the school to be good in March 2014.

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	137381
Local authority	Essex
Inspection number	10295043
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	630
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	David Hall
Principal	Tom Bottrill
Website	www.plumberowprimaryacademy.org
Date of previous inspection	14 June 2018, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school is part of the Academies Enterprise Trust.
- There is a new principal in post since the previous inspection.
- There are before- and after-school childcare clubs run by the school.
- The school does not use any alternative provision.
- There is a pre-school provision on the school site, but this is not part of the school.

Information about this inspection

Inspectors carried out this ungraded inspection under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

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.

- 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.
- Inspectors met with the principal, vice-principal, assistant vice-principal, subject leaders and the leader for SEND. They also met with the trust regional education director and the national director of education from the trust.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics and history. For each deep dive inspectors spoke to subject leaders, visited lessons, spoke to teachers and pupils and looked at work in pupils' books. Inspectors also heard pupils read to a familiar adult.
- Inspectors met with staff to talk about the curriculum, workload and the behaviour and personal development of pupils. They also met with groups of pupils to talk about learning and well-being.
- Inspectors considered a range of documents, including the school's self-evaluation, plans for improvement and minutes of meetings of the academy council and the trust. Attendance records were checked.
- Inspectors visited the before- and after-school provision provided by the school.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour at playtimes, lunchtimes and at the wraparound care. Inspectors talked to pupils about behaviour, bullying and welfare.
- Inspectors considered the 133 online responses to Ofsted Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire for parents, including 130 free-text comments. Inspectors also considered the 63 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire for staff. There were no responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire for pupils.

Inspection team

Karen Stanton, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Paul Fykin

Ofsted Inspector

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