

Inspection of a good school: Southover CofE Primary School

Potters Lane, Lewes, East Sussex BN7 1JP

Inspection dates:

23 and 24 January 2024

Outcome

Southover CofE Primary School continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

The school motto of 'live, love, learn' is intrinsic to all that the school does. This ethos is valued by pupils, staff, governors and parents. Several comment on the importance of the school in the community and the 'family feel' which means that everyone is included. Pupils value this and are clear on the importance of celebrating everyone's uniqueness.

Pupils understand the expectations for positive behaviour in school. They know that if they make mistakes, they will have the opportunity to discuss what went wrong. Pupils talk about how kind and supportive staff are. This helps pupils to feel safe in school. They are content that there is always someone to speak to if they have any worries.

There is a buzz of excitement about reading throughout the school. Pupils love visiting the library. They value this space and actively discuss the benefits of reading. Pupils talk about how reading helps to improve their mood and transports them to another world. As a result of the school's sharp focus on reading in the older year groups, pupils achieve very well. Lower down the school, more work is being done to support pupils so that they can also achieve as well as their older peers.

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

The school has refined the curriculum to ensure it meets the needs of the mixed-age classes. The school has successfully reviewed the sequencing of the curriculum from the early years to Year 6 and carefully considered the provision for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) in each area. This helps staff to tailor learning for all pupils effectively. The additional needs of pupils are identified as soon as possible. Appropriate support is then put in place and external advice is sought.

In lessons, staff model concepts and the use of key vocabulary to support pupils' understanding. They also plan in opportunities for pupils to recap on what they have learned previously. Pupils can describe what they have learned before and how this helps

them with what comes next. In physical education, for example, pupils explain how learning about rules and tactics helps them to adjust their strategies in different games.

While reviewing the curriculum, the school has ensured that pupils' wider development is also prioritised. There is a multitude of clubs for pupils to attend. The school has considered when to timetable these so as many pupils as possible can attend. Pupils are proud of the extra-curricular offer. They are supported to develop an appreciation of music and relish the opportunity to perform as part of the school orchestra. Pupils fondly recall what they learned during the art and science, technology, engineering and mathematics weeks. These events help pupils to have aspirations for their possible future careers. Leaders take care to involve as many pupils as possible in representing the school in sporting events, reflecting the school's inclusive nature. Starting in the early years, every pupil has regular swimming lessons. Last year, the vast majority of pupils who left Year 6 were able to swim independently.

There is a strong ambition for all pupils to learn to read fluently. However, phonics outcomes in 2023 were lower than the school's aspirations. Leaders have taken swift action to address this issue. Staff who deliver phonics sessions understand the school's expectations and have received appropriate training. However, not all staff implement the agreed system with the same consistent approach. The school has designed a reading spine which outlines the books that pupils will be exposed to throughout their time in school. Pupils are enthusiastic about these and confidently discuss mature themes that arise, such as apartheid. Pupils who are at an earlier stage of learning to read are still immersed in these books while also reading other books that help them practise the sounds they know.

The school promotes a calm environment in which all pupils can learn. This is achieved through the strong relationships between staff and pupils that are built from the early years upwards. Staff take time to understand pupils' individual needs. Pupils told the inspector that this helps them to feel valued. There are clear expectations for behaviour, and everyone understands these. Sometimes, pupils need more support to meet these high expectations. The school ensures that this help is quickly put in place. Pupils explore their own feelings through assemblies and the planned curriculum. They talk about strategies they learn, such as how to recognise their own unique talents. One pupil explained that their teacher supported them to feel good about themselves, which in turn helped their behaviour.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- There are some minor inconsistencies in the way that some staff deliver phonics sessions. These are not always in line with the school's expectations. This means that pupils do not always learn to read as quickly as they could. The school should continue

to support staff in implementing the agreed teaching strategies for phonics so that pupils learn consistently well.

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 September 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](#)' is used to mean pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (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	114510
Local authority	East Sussex
Inspection number	10296189
Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	309
Appropriate authority	Local authority
Chairs of governing body	Andrew Barnard Susanne Pollard
Headteacher	Noel Fadden
Website	https://www.southoverceprimary.co.uk/
Date of previous inspection	26 June 2018, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school is a Church of England school in the Diocese of Chichester. The last inspection of the school's religious character was in November 2016.
- The school does not currently use any alternative provision.

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. The inspector discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and has taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- The inspector met with the headteacher and the deputy headteacher. She also met with other school leaders, staff and pupils.
- The inspector met with six governors, including the chairs of the governing body. She also spoke with a representative on behalf of East Sussex local authority.

- The inspector carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, science 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 also visited mathematics lessons and looked at a sample of pupils' work.
- To inspect safeguarding, the inspector checked the single central record of recruitment checks and talked to leaders responsible for safeguarding. The inspector also talked to a range of staff and pupils informally.
- The inspector considered the responses to the confidential staff survey and spoke to a range of staff about their views of the school.
- The inspector took account of the 156 responses to the Ofsted Parent View questionnaire and the additional 99 free-text responses.
- The inspector met with a range of pupils to discuss their views about the school and talked to pupils informally during social times and in lessons.
- The inspector reviewed a range of documentation, including the school development plan.

Inspection team

Sara Staggs, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

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