

Inspection of The Robert Drake Primary School

Church Road, New Thundersley, Benfleet, Essex, SS7 3HT

Inspection dates: 6 and 7 February 2024

Overall effectiveness	Good
The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Good
Early years provision	Good
Previous inspection grade	Not previously inspected under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

The headteachers of this school are Natalie Jackson and Penny Coe. This school is a single academy trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer, Penny Coe, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by John Jackson.

Ofsted has not previously inspected The Robert Drake Primary School as an academy under section 5 of the Education Act 2005 as, until November 2020, the school was exempted by law from routine inspection, so there has been a longer gap than usual between inspections. Judgements in this report are based on the current inspection framework and also reflect changes that may have happened at any point since the last graded inspection of the predecessor school.

What is it like to attend this school?

The Robert Drake Primary School is a happy and friendly place to learn. Pupils learn a curriculum that builds on what they already know and stretches them further. Pupils enjoy their lessons and achieve well.

Pupils value the warm relationships they develop with their teachers. This helps them to feel safe. They know there is always someone to speak to if they have worries.

Pupils embrace the school's ethos. They know the school's motto 'everyone is special, different and unique'. Pupils behave well. They know how they should behave and live up to leaders' expectations. This creates a calm atmosphere across the school. Pupils use what they learn about friendship to treat each other with kindness and respect.

Pupils attend a range of school trips and take part in clubs such as netball, street dance, cross-country and karate. Pupils value the clubs on offer, and they talk highly of the 'Happiness Hub'.

Pupils show responsibility in their leadership roles. They are proud to have jobs at school and know that this is an important part of making their school a better place. Eco-warriors are especially proud of working to make the school's environment better, such as by planting trees.

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

The school has developed a curriculum that is broad and ambitious. From the early years, the school sets out what pupils will learn and do. Staff ensure that pupils have the skills to explain their thinking with sophisticated vocabulary. Teachers present information clearly. They often use questioning effectively to check pupils' understanding. However, in some subjects, teachers' checks on what pupils know and can do are not as effective. In these subjects, some teachers do not always spot when pupils misunderstand or have forgotten something. As a result, pupils do not learn the curriculum in these subjects as well as they could.

The school has implemented an effective phonics programme that starts in Reception. Children in the early years learn to read words and simple sentences. Most pupils gain the knowledge they need to become confident readers. Books are well matched to pupils' reading abilities. This helps them to develop their reading fluency and confidence. Older pupils develop their skills of comprehension and inference. This includes discussing features of texts and the choices authors make when writing. Pupils enjoy the new reading programme and the school's challenge to become word millionaires by reading one million words by the end of Year 6. Occasionally, staff do not identify when pupils at the early stages of reading have not learned key knowledge. This means that some pupils struggle to move forward in the reading programme as quickly as they could.

Most staff have strong subject knowledge and adapt teaching effectively to meet pupils' needs. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are well supported within the school. Staff working with pupils with complex needs have a strong understanding of how to support pupils. They receive relevant training to help them do this. Staff adeptly support pupils with SEND to learn the curriculum.

Pupils are kind and caring towards each other. They welcome visitors to their school with enthusiasm and are keen to share their learning. Pupils listen well in lessons. They follow school routines and encourage each other to make positive choices. Pupils are proud that they attend a 'telling school', where pupils know to share their worries with staff. All staff are ready and willing to help when the need arises.

The school plans opportunities for pupils to try new experiences that enhance the curriculum such as by using virtual reality when learning. Opportunities to attend school trips, attend clubs and represent the school at events are a highlight for pupils. Starting in the early years, pupils learn about different religions and cultures. This helps pupils to understand respect and tolerance.

The school has been through a change in leadership, and staff feel well supported and proud to work at the school. Leaders know the strengths of the school and the areas for development. Trustees work in partnership with leaders to make improvements to the quality of education.

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, including phonics, teachers do not always identify gaps in pupils' learning. This means that staff sometimes plan activities that do not build effectively on what pupils already know and can do. The school needs to ensure that in all subjects, staff check effectively what pupils know and can do and use this to inform their planning and teaching.

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	137246
Local authority	Essex
Inspection number	10242305
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	315
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	John Jackson
CEO of the trust	Penny Coe
Headteacher	Natalie Jackson and Penny Coe (Co-headteachers)
Website	www.robertdrake.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- The school is a single academy trust, The Robert Drake Primary School Trust. The school converted to become an academy in February 2012. The school refers to trustees as governors.
- The predecessor school, also called The Robert Drake Primary School, was inspected in 2008 and was judged outstanding. Since that inspection, there have been changes to leadership and staffing, including new headteachers.
- The school does not use any alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 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.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics, geography, physical education and computing.
- For each deep dive, inspectors 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.
- Inspectors also looked at curriculum information in some 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.
- Inspectors held meetings with the headteacher and other leaders, including leaders who work within the trust. Inspectors also met leaders with responsibility for pupils with SEND, behaviour and attendance and pupils' personal development.
- Inspectors met with representatives from the trust board.
- Inspectors considered responses to Ofsted's online surveys for parents, staff and pupils.

Inspection team

Nerrissa Bear, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Rebecca McCutcheon	Ofsted Inspector
Lucille Pollard	Ofsted Inspector

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