

# Inspection of a good school: River Tees Primary Academy

Sulby Avenue, Pallister Park, Middlesbrough TS3 8RD

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Inspection dates: 10 and 11 April 2024

## Outcome

River Tees Primary Academy continues to be a good school.

The headteacher of this school is Sophie Moss. This school is part of River Tees Multi-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, Christina Jones, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Pat Cambage.

## What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are quick to settle at River Tees Primary Academy, having struggled to access learning in their mainstream schools. They are happy and safe. Under the patient guidance of staff, pupils can better manage their feelings and behaviour. Pupils conduct themselves well in lessons and around the school. Their behaviour improves markedly over time.

Staff and pupils enjoy respectful relationships. These help pupils to develop positive attitudes to their learning. They gain the resilience to stick at their work even when it gets tricky. Pupils, including the many with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), learn an ambitious curriculum that helps them to close gaps in their literacy and numeracy knowledge. Very many achieve well.

Pupils benefit from the school's impressive personal development programme. They learn strategies to keep themselves safe. Pupils are confident to speak out if they feel anxious or unsafe. They know that staff listen to them and help to resolve any problems they have. Pupils take part in a wide range of activities designed to boost their confidence and develop their character. These include off-site visits, planning fitness circuits or speaking in front of others. Pupils' sense of self-worth grows through the optimistic, caring ethos that leaders and staff have instilled.

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

The school educates pupils who are at risk of exclusion from mainstream education. Leaders and staff have successfully focused on 'getting the basics right'. They have established a calm school where pupils follow routines and behave well. Pupils are well

placed to learn. The ambitious curriculum is designed to equip them with the core knowledge they need to succeed in mainstream schools.

Pupils arrive throughout the academic year. Leaders quickly gain a detailed knowledge of pupils' emotional, social and academic needs. Staff use this information to shape the curriculum each pupil receives. Most pupils achieve well in subjects where the curriculum is well established. This is the case in mathematics, reading, and personal, social and health education (PSHE), for example.

Many pupils join as unwilling, or weak, readers. The school's carefully crafted curriculum ignites pupils' interest in reading. It also equips them with the skills to become more fluent, confident readers. Pupils in the early stages of reading learn important phonics knowledge. They use this knowledge to read books that interest them. Pupils also enjoy the stories adults read to them. Many pupils develop a genuine interest in reading. They like to read out loud and to talk about books they have read.

In most subjects, teachers adapt the curriculum to best suit pupils', including those with SEND, interests and needs. Teachers provide pupils with appropriate resources and the time to practise and remember core knowledge and concepts. Class sizes are small. This helps adults to pay close attention to how well pupils understand what they study. Teachers use assessment to adapt learning and make sure pupils are ready to attempt more challenging work. These strong features are not consistently evident in a small number of subjects. Where this is the case, some pupils do not develop such a secure grasp of what they study. Working to sensible timescales, leaders are developing the curriculum in these few subjects.

Skilled staff support pupils to meet their individual personal development targets. This has a significant, positive impact on pupils' conduct and attendance, which is high. Pupils are increasingly reflective and self-aware. They become less reliant on adults' support to regulate their behaviour. Lessons run smoothly and with minimal disruption. Pupils make positive contributions to the wider community through the school's personal development road map. For example, pupils collect materials for a charity supporting the homeless. Pupils also develop an understanding of skills for later life, such as financial management.

Trust and school leaders are mindful of the pressures working in a small school can bring. They seek and take heed of staff's opinions. Leaders provide well for staff's well-being and take reasonable steps to reduce workload. Pupils, parents, staff and commissioning headteachers hold the school in high esteem.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

## What does the school need to do to improve?

### (Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In a small number of subjects, adults do not adapt learning precisely to some pupils' needs. Where this is the case, pupils' learning over time is not as secure. Working to a realistic timetable, the school should continue to provide staff with the training and support to deliver the curriculum equally well in all subjects.

## 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 predecessor school, The Oaktree Centre, to be good in January 2015.

## 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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	142511
<b>Local authority</b>	Middlesbrough
<b>Inspection number</b>	10297430
<b>Type of school</b>	Alternative provision
<b>School category</b>	Academy alternative provision sponsor-led
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	8 to 11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	24
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	Board of trustees
<b>Chair of trust</b>	Pat Cambage
<b>CEO of the trust</b>	Christina Jones
<b>Headteacher</b>	Sophie Moss
<b>Website</b>	<a href="https://primary.rtmat.org.uk">https://primary.rtmat.org.uk</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	7 December 2018, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

## Information about this school

- River Tees Primary Academy is an alternative provision for pupils aged between eight and 11. There are currently 24 pupils attending the school. Almost all pupils are dual registered. This means that they are on the roll of two schools: the commissioning school and River Tees Primary Academy.
- The headteacher took up post in April 2022.
- Pupils join the school midway through their primary education. Many join at times other than the start of the academic year.
- There is a high proportion of pupils with SEND.
- The school does not make use of any alternative providers.

## 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 held several meetings with the headteacher and other senior staff during the course of this inspection.
- Inspectors held discussions with teaching and support staff.
- An inspector met with two members of the local governing committee.
- An inspector met with four trustees, including the chair of the trust and the chief executive officer.
- The lead inspector met with a representative of Middlesbrough local authority.
- An inspector spoke with two headteachers from commissioning schools.
- Deep dives were carried out in these subjects: mathematics, PSHE and reading. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with curriculum leaders, visited a sample of lessons alongside school leaders, spoke with teachers, spoke with some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. Inspectors also discussed the curriculum with curriculum leaders and looked at samples of pupils' work in two other subjects.
- Inspectors spoke with pupils about their learning, their views on behaviour and the wider experiences they receive at school.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour across the duration of the inspection.
- To check the effectiveness of safeguarding, inspectors: checked the single central record of pre-appointment checks; looked at safeguarding documentation; and spoke with staff, pupils, parents, governors, trustees and a representative from Middlesbrough local authority. Inspectors considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.
- Inspectors reviewed the parental responses received through the Ofsted online questionnaire, Ofsted Parent View, including the free-text responses. Inspectors took account of the school's analysis of its own surveys of parents' opinions.
- Inspectors considered the responses received through Ofsted's staff questionnaire.

### **Inspection team**

John Lucas, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Emily Stevens

His Majesty's Inspector

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