

Inspection of a good school: The Richard Clarke First School

Schoolhouse Lane, Abbots Bromley, Rugeley, Staffordshire WS15 3BT

Inspection date: 2 May 2024

The headteacher of this school is Kay Hanson. This school is part of Uttoxeter Learning Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer, Kerry Rochester, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Sidney Michael Slater.

Outcome

There has been no change to this school's overall judgement of good as a result of this ungraded (section 8) inspection. However, the evidence gathered suggests that the inspection grade might be outstanding if a graded (section 5) inspection were carried out now. The school's next inspection will be a graded inspection.

What is it like to attend this school?

This is a highly harmonious and happy learning community. Pupils and their parents and carers have nothing but praise and appreciation for what this small school with a big heart offers. The motto 'Together, Everyone Achieves More' embodies the togetherness and sense of collaboration that permeates throughout all that the school does. This is a school with a true sense of warmth, caring and inclusivity.

Pupils love coming to school; they are on time and rarely absent. They throw themselves into the exciting lessons that teachers provide. They demonstrate exemplary attitudes and behaviours, both in class and around school. Behaviour that falls below the school's high expectations is rare. If it happens, teachers quickly help pupils to understand and improve it.

All staff want pupils to achieve well, and they expect nothing less than pupils' best. In turn, pupils work diligently to meet teachers' high expectations. Pupils achieve very well and the quality of their work across the curriculum is high. They take enormous care and pride in the work they do, which shows on every page of their exercise books. Pupils here are very well prepared for the challenges of middle school.

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

The school has designed and put in place a highly structured and well-considered curriculum. Teachers have given much thought to establishing the most important content in each subject and the precise order in which to teach it. For all subjects and in all lessons, they have been meticulous in deciding what 'take-aways' pupils will learn and remember. Because of this clarity, teachers are effective in assessing how well pupils are retaining what they most need to know.

From a young age, pupils can describe and define each subject they learn because teachers continually remind them. For instance, pupils told inspectors that geography is 'the study of places, physical features and the link between humans and the world'. This understanding helps pupils to learn and retain subsequent information. This showed, for instance, in the detailed explanations they gave of the upper, middle and lower courses of rivers. In mathematics, pupils become skilled at explaining their reasoning because teachers routinely expect them to do so. They regularly revisit the content of previous lessons so that pupils gain secure mathematical knowledge and can apply it to new problems.

Pupils achieve well and demonstrate good knowledge of the curriculum they learn. However, there is no complacency whatsoever. There is an embedded culture of continual improvement. Leaders at all levels are tenacious in evaluating how well things are going. They talk about the importance of making 'tweaks to transform'.

Teachers tirelessly aim to ensure all pupils become fluent, confident readers. Teachers and support staff are experts in delivering the school's systematic phonics programme. They make lessons engaging, precise and purposeful. Pupils quickly acquire the phonics knowledge they need to decode the texts they meet. As they move through school, they become immersed in the high-quality, diverse texts the school introduces them to. Reading is at the heart of this school and pupils become highly competent readers. They are well prepared for their move to middle school.

Though a small school, the resources and expertise that are in place to help pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are very effective and responsive. Staff know the pupils very well and quickly identify any needs they have. The school routinely and swiftly involves external agencies when needed. Teachers and support staff ensure they include pupils with SEND in all the school offers. As a result, pupils with SEND achieve well.

Learning beyond the classroom is a real strength. The school provides a range of rich opportunities to enhance pupils' personal development. Pupils take on important roles, becoming library leaders and play leaders. They collect for the local food bank and take home equipment to collect litter in their local communities. The school carefully plans trips, visits and visitors to give pupils a broad view of life in modern Britain.

This is a school that has been extremely successful in engaging with all those involved in the school. Parents appreciate, and are grateful for, the help the school provides their

children. Staff are immensely proud to work here and feel valued and supported. Pupils, parents and staff say that The Richard Clarke First School feels just like a caring family.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

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 Richard Clarke First School, to be good in February 2012.

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	148506
Local authority	Staffordshire
Inspection number	10322920
Type of school	First
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	4 to 9
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	100
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Sidney Michael Slater
Headteacher	Kay Hanson
Website	www.richardclarke.staffs.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- The school joined the Uttoxeter Learning Trust in September 2021.
- The school does not 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. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken this into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors held meetings with the headteacher, assistant headteacher and other leaders.
- 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 carried out deep dives in these subjects: reading, mathematics and geography. 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.
- An inspector listened to pupils read to members of school staff.
- An inspector visited a school assembly.
- An inspector held meetings with the chair of the board of trustees, the CEO and members of the local board of governors.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour in lessons at different times of the day and at breaktimes and lunchtimes. They spoke formally with groups of pupils, as well as talking to pupils in lessons and around school.
- Inspectors considered responses to Ofsted Parent View, including parents' free-text responses. Inspectors also took account of responses to Ofsted's staff and pupil surveys.
- Inspectors reviewed information published on the school's website.
- An inspector spoke to parents at the school gate.

Inspection team

Gareth Morgan, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Alexander Laney

His Majesty's Inspector

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