

Inspection of a good school: Summerhill School

Lodge Lane, Kingswinford, West Midlands DY6 9XE

Inspection dates:

8 and 9 May 2024

Outcome

Summerhill School continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Summerhill School pupils and staff greet everyone, including visitors, in a caring and supportive way. Community and togetherness are at the heart of this wonderful school. Pupils are happy in school. All pupils who spoke to inspectors understand the 'CARE' values. These include courage and ambition. Relationships between pupils and staff are courteous and respectful. One parent's comment captured the views of many: 'Summerhill has the children at the forefront of everything they do. Summerhill School is a family.'

There is a purposeful atmosphere around the school. Pupils can focus on their learning well. Pupils are safe and demonstrate excellent behaviour. Pupils work hard and achieve well, including pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Pupils' very positive attitudes, along with the well-thought-out curriculum, enable them to grow in confidence and resilience by the time they leave school.

The school places a strong emphasis on pupils' personal development. Pupils can explain clearly their understanding of fundamental British values, such as democracy. Pupil leadership opportunities include well-being and peer ambassadors. The extra-curricular programme is rich and diverse. Pupils regularly take part in activities, such as the Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme, lifesaving and a successful Combined Cadet Force.

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

Under the new headteacher's leadership, there have been significant and highly effective staffing changes since the last inspection. These include changes to staff in senior, subject and pastoral leadership roles. The school has successfully embedded high expectations around pupils' learning and behaviour. In all year groups, positive relationships between staff, pupils, parents and carers help pupils to be confident and happy.

The school has accurately identified the important things that pupils need to know to succeed. Teachers use 'recall' questions at the start of lessons. These help most pupils remember their previous knowledge well, which helps them to understand new learning. For example, pupils in Year 9 recall their learning about poetry techniques in English. They can use this to discuss how a poet has challenged different points of view. However, in some subjects, teachers do not know whether pupils have secured the important knowledge before moving on. This results in some pupils not always building on previous learning, because they have not grasped the key ideas.

The school quickly identifies any special educational needs that pupils may have. Teachers use 'one-page profiles' effectively in order to adapt their teaching. Leaders ensure that all pupils access the same ambitious curriculum. Where needed, the school adapts pupils' curriculum effectively, to meet specific needs.

The school has effectively developed strategies to support pupils who are not confident readers. Specialist staff rapidly address weaknesses in pupils' phonics, grammar and comprehension. Newly trained pupil 'reading champions' support younger pupils effectively. They listen to pupils read and help correct any misunderstandings. Teachers model reading and encourage pupils to read during tutor time and outside school. Year 8 pupils engage with elderly residents through 'silver stories' once a week. Pupils read confidently to these residents. This also promotes highly effective community contact with the school.

The school understands the importance of attendance. It takes highly effective and successful action to work with the very small number of families in which pupils' absence is higher than it should be. Attendance remains a key priority for the school and community. Leaders know this and continue to work with families to celebrate the importance of being in school.

Pupils' well-being is a priority for the school, including promoting pupils' positive mental health. The personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) curriculum is well planned and sequenced. Pupils learn about topics including healthy relationships and online safety. Pupils discuss careers, university aspirations and apprenticeships from when they join the school. This prepares them very well for the next stages of their lives.

Governors know the school very well. They support and challenge appropriately in meetings and on their visits to the school. They hold the school to account well for all aspects of provision, including safeguarding and the quality of SEND provision. The school has implemented a well-thought-out professional development programme for staff. Staff workload is carefully considered, which staff are appreciative of. Staff are proud to work at Summerhill school.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Teachers do not consistently check that all pupils understand and remember what has been learned in some subjects. This means that some pupils do not fully understand the necessary knowledge as effectively in some subjects compared to others. The school should ensure that all teachers check pupils' understanding and adapt their teaching accordingly so that pupils become secure in the key knowledge they need.

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 first ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be good in April 2019.

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	103854
Local authority	Dudley
Inspection number	10343772
Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1,056
Appropriate authority	Local authority
Chair of governing body	Carol Fletcher
Headteacher	Tim Harris
Website	www.summerhill.dudley.sch.uk
Dates of previous inspection	3 and 4 April 2019, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The headteacher was appointed from 1 September 2021.
- The school makes use of five alternative providers for eight pupils.
- The school meets the requirements of the provider access legislation, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 8 to 13 with information and engagement about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.

Information about this inspection

Inspections are a point-in-time judgement about the quality of a school's education provision.

- Inspectors discussed any continued impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- The inspectors focused on the following deep dives: English, history, modern foreign languages and science. The inspectors held discussions about the curriculum, visited lessons, looked at pupils' work and talked with pupils about their learning. The inspectors also looked at the curriculum in other subjects.

- The inspectors reviewed a range of school documents. These included information about pupils' behaviour, attendance, the school's curriculum and improvement planning. The school's website was also checked.
- 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.
- The inspectors observed informal times of the day as part of their evaluation of safeguarding and pupils' behaviour.
- The inspectors held meetings with the chair of governors and other governors representing different committees, the director of education for the local authority, the headteacher and other senior leaders, teachers and pupils. The inspectors also talked informally to pupils, staff, parents and carers to gather information about school life.
- The inspectors considered responses to Ofsted Parent View and the free-text comments. The inspectors also considered the responses to Ofsted's staff survey and pupil questionnaires.

Inspection team

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