Inspection of Sunny Bank Primary School

Sunny Bank, Murston, Sittingbourne, Kent ME10 3QN

Inspection dates: 9 to 10 July 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 head of school is Jack Allen. This school is part of The Island 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, Debbie Rousell, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Howard Fisher. There is also an executive headteacher Ryan Driver, who is responsible for this school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Expectations are high at Sunny Bank. Pupils understand the importance of their learning. They are keen to do well, and they do. Pupils are delighted when their class is recognised for reading the most words in a week or for having the highest weekly attendance.

Pupils are well cared for. Relationships throughout the school are warm and good humoured. Pupils feel safe. Their needs are known and understood. Pupils are confident that staff listen and respond if they have any worries.

Pupils know that their opinions matter. They develop confidence and are keen to share their talents. For example, Year 6 pupils are excited about the opportunity to perform their show, 'I'm an 11-year-old, get me out of here', at the end of the year.

Pupils relish the many opportunities they are given to play and learn together outside. For older pupils this includes learning to ride their bicycles safely. Children in early years explore different habitats or carefully collect minibeasts in the well laid out forest school area.

The school's ROAR values of responsibility, optimism, ambition and resilience are reinforced at every opportunity. Pupils behave well. They aspire to the school's motto, 'be the best you can be', in all they do.

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

There is an unrelenting focus on reading across the school. This was summed up by a member of staff who told inspectors, 'If you can read you can learn.' Staff are committed to ensuring that all pupils learn to read to at least at an age-appropriate level before they leave. Pupils achieve well and have the reading skills they need to prepare them well for the next stages of their education and beyond. Alongside this, pupils develop a passion for reading. Visits to the school library are the source of much excitement and discussion. Pupils suggest books to each other to share their enjoyment of the stories they explore.

Learning to read starts as soon as children start school, with regular phonics sessions. Staff are experts in the teaching of early reading. Any pupils who start to fall behind are quickly identified and given the support they need to catch up quickly. Reading books are carefully matched to reinforce what pupils learn and build both their confidence and reading fluency.

The school has a sharp focus on communication and language in the early years to ensure that children quickly acquire and use new words, phrases and sentences. There is a focus on developing vocabulary throughout the school and across subjects. Staff constantly introduce ambitious new words and check pupils understand them. Pupils delight in using these in both their speaking and, increasingly, in their writing.

Pupils attain well in mathematics. The school has ensured that pupils build strong knowledge in facts such as times tables. Pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), are given the support they need to apply their knowledge to confidently solve increasingly complex problems.

Pupils enjoy the broad and balanced curriculum on offer. The school enriches the curriculum with a wide range of visits and visitors. The curriculum itself has been well structured from early years to Year 6 to sequence learning towards pupils having the knowledge and skills they need for the next stage of their education. The needs of pupils with SEND are carefully identified and any barriers to learning are addressed so that they can also learn well across the full curriculum.

In English and mathematics, staff check pupils' knowledge regularly. They use this information effectively in order to adapt sequences and match learning to pupils' needs. Pupils learn well in these subjects. In other subjects, learning is not always as well matched to what pupils already know and remember. This means pupils are not always retaining and then building knowledge as effectively across the school's full curriculum.

The behaviour policy supports the consistent approach to managing behaviour seen throughout the school. It provides clear guidelines for staff and expectations for pupils. The school is an orderly environment. In lessons, pupils follow instructions, listen well and work hard.

While the school promotes the importance of ensuring pupils attend regularly, some pupils do not attend school well. Low attendance means these pupils miss out on important learning. Leaders and staff recognise the need to continue their work with families to ensure the required support is put in place.

The personal development curriculum helps pupils to learn about themselves and others. Pupils are passionate about the importance of equality. They use their curriculum learning to build their understanding of democracy and inclusion. Pupils relish the opportunities to apply for roles in the wider life of the school, such as being part of the pupil parliament or as a 'Well-being Warrior'. Pupils recognise the importance of them having a voice in supporting their school community.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In subjects other than English and mathematics, staff do not always check what pupils know and remember. This means that sometimes tasks are not sufficiently well matched to build pupils' knowledge effectively. The school should check what

is being learned and remembered and use this understanding to refine and adapt the curriculum where necessary.

- Some pupils do not attend school regularly. This means they miss out on valuable learning. The school should continue to work with pupils and their families to ensure that all pupils attend school well.

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	147729
Local authority	Kent
Inspection number	10322047
Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	213
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Howard Fisher
CEO of trust	Debbie Rousell
Headteacher	Jack Allen (head of school)
Website	www.sunnybank.kent.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- The school joined The Island Learning Trust in February 2020.
- The current head of school joined the school in April 2022.
- The school does not currently 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. The inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.

- During the inspection, the inspectors met with school leaders. The lead inspector also talked to representatives of the governing body, met with the CEO and executive headteacher from the trust and had a telephone conversation with the chair of the trustees.
- The inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics, geography and modern foreign languages. For each deep dive, the inspector discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. The lead inspector listened to pupils read.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspectors: reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of leaders and staff; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.
- The inspectors reviewed responses to Ofsted's parent, pupil and staff surveys and spoke to parents at the school gate.
- The inspectors talked to staff to gather their views about the school, including their workload and well-being. The inspectors met with several groups of pupils, as well as speaking to pupils during lessons, playtimes and at lunchtime.

Inspection team

Deborah Perkins, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Caroline Clarke	Ofsted Inspector

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