Inspection of a school judged good for overall effectiveness before September 2024: Old Town Infant School and Nursery

Green Road, Poole, Dorset BH15 1QB

Inspection dates: 25 and 26 March 2025

Outcome

Evidence gathered during this ungraded (section 8) inspection suggests that the school's work may have improved significantly across all areas since the previous inspection. The school's next inspection will be a graded inspection.

The headteacher of this school is Douglas Gubbins. This school is part of Coastal Learning Partnership which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer (CEO), Paul Howieson, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Martin Copsey.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils at Old Town Infant School and Nursery blossom. They rise to the high expectations the school has of them. The school is ambitious for every pupil. Pupils achieve well.

The school has worked hard to create a nurturing environment for pupils to learn in. For example, pupils can often be seen sharing a book in the 'enchanted forest' library. Relationships between staff and pupils are extremely supportive. This reflects the school's vision of 'children at the heart of everything we do'. Pupils know precisely how to behave. As a result, the youngest children in Nursery learn to share well and follow instructions. This behaviour becomes intrinsic to older pupils. Pupils cultivate a calm and purposeful atmosphere for learning.

Pupils make a tangible difference to the school. They have enhanced social times by suggesting a vast array of opportunities. For example, pupils develop gross motor skills when skipping and playing ball games while others learn about healthy eating through a fruit and vegetable stall. Pupils, such as the many school councillors, make meaningful contributions. They are responsible for choosing the gifts the school buys for those who are less fortunate, for example.

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

The school has decided on the values it wants to instil in pupils. It has devised characters such as 'Respectful Remy' and 'Resilient Rex'. This work means pupils are demonstrating the learning behaviours needed to be extremely well prepared for their next stage.

The school has designed carefully a highly ambitious curriculum that starts in the Nursery. It places a sharp focus on the vocabulary pupils need to learn. Consequently, children in Nursery use words like 'seedling' in their play when explaining how plants grow. Pupils in Year 2 compare the human and physical features of Poole with Rio de Janeiro, developing deep geographical knowledge. The school insightfully reviews its curriculum to evaluate the impact on pupils.

Pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds do equally well as their peers. Their achievements, for example in the Year 1 phonics screening check, are impressive. Those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) thrive. Their needs are quickly and accurately identified. Staff have equally high expectations of what pupils who are disadvantaged can achieve alongside their peers. The school's tailored support enables these pupils to make accelerated progress through the curriculum. This includes pupils in the 'Sea Lions' bespoke provision. Here, highly trained staff meet their needs extremely well.

A love of reading pervades the school. Children in early years get off to a flying start when learning to read. The carefully selected rhymes and stories excite them as they develop their communication and language in preparation for the formal stages of learning to read. Children are motivated to read and write. Those who need additional support receive it quickly, enabling them to keep up. The way pupils are taught to write is exceptional. The school places a sharp focus on securing the basics of writing, so pupils' writing is of the highest quality.

The development of pupils' language is a high priority. Pupils learn vocabulary to express their feelings and needs. This extends to pupils in 'Sea Lions' who recognise independently when they need a resource to support their learning. Routines are exceptionally well embedded in the early years. Children take turns, share and include one another in their play. They have sustained engagement. Pupils have a thirst for learning and are highly motivated.

The school is unrelenting in its determination to improve attendance for a minority of pupils who miss too much learning. At the centre is the school's steadfast desire to provide pupils with the support they need. The school develops a strong sense of belonging, for example, through its promotion of walking to school.

The school's wider offer is exemplary. Pupils nurture their well-being through 'kindness day' and 'rainbow breathing'. They learn about physical safety in their locality through water and rail safety workshops. Pupils have extensive knowledge of the fundamental British Values. They have ample opportunity to build confidence through the school's 'time to shine' assemblies.

Staff are highly complimentary about the comprehensive programme of professional development which impacts positively on teaching practice. Purposeful partnerships such as the 'parent focus group' mean that parents feel highly involved. Those responsible for governance know the school extremely well and hold leaders rigorously to account to achieve the best possible education.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Background

Until September 2024, on a graded (section 5) inspection we gave schools an overall effectiveness grade, in addition to the key and provision judgements. Overall effectiveness grades given before September 2024 will continue to be visible on school inspection reports and on Ofsted's website. From September 2024 graded inspections will not include an overall effectiveness grade. This school was, before September 2024, judged to be good/outstanding for its overall effectiveness.

We have now inspected the school to determine whether it has taken effective action to maintain the standards identified at that previous inspection. 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's work has improved significantly or that it may not be as strong as it was at the last inspection, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection. A graded inspection 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, Old Town Infant School and Nursery, to be good for overall effectiveness in July 2013.

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	142971
Local authority	Bournemouth, Christchurch & Poole
Inspection number	10344732
Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	3 to 7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	170
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Martin Copsey
CEO of the trust	Paul Howieson
Headteacher	Douglas Gubbins
Website	www.oldtowninfantschool.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	21 May 2019, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The current headteacher took up post in May 2020.
- Old Town Infant School and Nursery is part of the Coastal Learning Partnership.
- The school operates a ten-place nurture provision called the 'Sea Lions' for pupils with additional needs. These pupils spend time in this provision and they are integrated within the school when appropriate.
- There is a before- and after-school club for pupils who attend the school.
- The school does not currently use any alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

- Inspections are a point-in-time evaluation 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 inspector discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and has taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- The inspector spoke with school leaders, representatives from the trust including the CEO, the chair of the board of trustees and the chair of the local governing body and other local governors.
- The inspector visited a sample of lessons, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspector: 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 inspector observed pupils' behaviour in lessons and around the school site. Additionally, the inspector spoke to pupils to discuss their views about the school.
- The inspector considered responses to the online survey, Ofsted Parent View, including free-text responses. They also looked at responses to Ofsted's online staff survey. There were no responses to Ofsted's online pupil survey.

Inspection team

Lakmini Harkus, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector

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