Inspection of a school judged good for overall effectiveness before September 2024: Robert Sandilands Primary School and Nursery

Digby Road, Speen, Newbury, Berkshire RG14 1TS

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.

What is it like to attend this school?

This school is highly aspirational for all pupils. An exceptionally coherent and ambitious curriculum starts in the early years. Staff get to know pupils well and ensure they get the support they need to succeed. As a result, many pupils achieve impressive outcomes which are well above the national average in national curriculum tests.

The school has very high expectations for pupils' behaviour. Pupils rise to these. Behaviour is excellent. In lessons, pupils listen attentively, collaborate and support each other. Pupils have extremely positive attitudes to learning. They enjoy coming to school, which is reflected in their high attendance. Warm and nurturing relationships are evident between staff and pupils. Pupils feel safe and know that there is always someone they can talk to if they have any worries.

Pupils develop a strong sense of character. The school's eight 'compass' values, which include 'respect, community spirit and perseverance', are woven through everything the school does. This helps pupils develop an excellent understanding of their moral and social responsibilities. Pupils learn about different faiths and cultures through an ambitious personal, social, health and economic education curriculum. They demonstrate tolerance and fairness and develop an age-appropriate understanding of the concepts of democracy and respect.

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

The school has implemented a rigorous and ambitious curriculum that details the specific knowledge pupils will learn. Staff have excellent subject knowledge and deliver the curriculum expertly. They model new learning consistently well. They adapt learning activities and make effective use of resources to ensure that all pupils can succeed. Staff check pupils' learning to identify any gaps in knowledge and promptly address these. In mathematics, pupils get ample opportunity to use their knowledge of number and apply their learning of mathematical procedures. This helps them to develop confidence and fluency.

Children make an excellent start in the early years. They settle seamlessly into the school's highly effective learning routines. Staff create a rich and stimulating environment. There is a sharp focus on developing children's communication, language and vocabulary skills. Children engage very well with the learning activities and resources, which are carefully designed to deepen and extend children's learning.

Reading is a priority. Phonics is taught in Reception Year by well-trained staff who possess excellent subject knowledge. Staff check which sounds pupils know and make sure that the books pupils read match these sounds. Lesson activities promote regular practice of their learning. If pupils are falling behind, swift action is taken to make sure they get the help they need to keep up.

The school quickly identifies the needs of pupils with additional needs, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities. The school works collaboratively with pupils, parents and carers and professionals to ensure that pupils receive the right support to be successful. This work starts in the early years.

Pupils' behaviour, both in and outside the classroom, is exceptional. They are polite and are eager to talk about their learning and their experiences in the school. The school focuses on encouraging and rewarding good behaviour and praising improvement and effort in a range of ways. This includes presenting awards in Friday assemblies, in which the school shares its recognition with both pupils and parents.

The provision for pupils' wider personal development is a strength. Trips, such as those to the local church, zoo, farm and museums, deepen pupils' learning of the curriculum. Pupils also have access to engaging opportunities to develop talents and interests. This includes a variety of clubs, opportunities to compete in sports against local schools, participation in musical performances and inter-house competitions. Pupils' understanding of citizenship is enriched through visits to a local care home, the local church and shared events with another local school.

Pupils actively contribute to their school community. A number of pupils work as elected members of the school council. Others support their peers at playtime by helping with games and activities. Pupils take these positions seriously. They see themselves as role models for younger children. They rise to these responsibilities and conduct themselves exceptionally well.

Leaders are highly ambitious. Actions taken since the last inspection have not only maintained standards but have also delivered significant improvements. Governors have a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities. They provide a strong balance between challenge and support to the school. The school builds very positive relationships with parents. This approach helps to ensure that the school is at the heart of the community. Staff feel well supported. They get the training they need and say their hard work is valued. Consequently, staff are proud to work at the school.

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 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 school to be good for overall effectiveness in May 2016.

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	109861
Local authority	West Berkshire
Inspection number	10379716
Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	234
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Ian Nichol
Headteacher	Elizabeth Bucknell
Website	www.sandilands.w-berks.sch.uk
Dates of previous inspection	26 and 27 November 2019, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school does not currently make use of 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 met with the headteacher, senior leaders, the special educational needs coordinator, subject leaders, teachers and support staff.
- The inspector met with representatives from the governing body and spoke to a representative from the local authority.
- 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 considered the responses to Ofsted's online surveys for staff and pupils. They considered the responses to the online survey, Ofsted Parent View.
- The inspector spoke to pupils throughout the inspection.

Inspection team

James Stuart, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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