

Inspection of a good school: Sevenoaks Primary School

Bradbourne Park Road, Sevenoaks, Kent TN13 3LB

Inspection dates: 18 and 19 April 2023

Outcome

Sevenoaks Primary School continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils thrive in this inclusive and nurturing school. The school's vision of 'building resilience and lifelong learning' is central to life at Sevenoaks Primary. Pupils value the high level of support and care they receive from their teachers. They feel happy and safe. Pupils describe the school as 'joyful, fantastic and fun'.

The school's values of 'courage, kindness, creativity, team, love of learning and perseverance' are a key part of daily life. Pupils behave well and enjoy working together. Relationships between staff and pupils are strong. Pupils do not worry about bullying; it rarely happens here and is always resolved quickly. They know that they can talk to staff about any concerns or leave a message in their 'worry boxes'.

Staff have high expectations for all pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). They consistently promote pupils' personal development as well as their academic achievements. Pupils relish the range of clubs and activities on offer that help them explore interests and talents outside of lessons. They enjoy attending after-school clubs, such as orchestra, handball and musical theatre. Pupils enjoy the educational visits staff plan, including the residential trip to Marchants Hill and attending the Young Voices event. These opportunities help to deepen their learning.

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

Leaders and governors have the highest ambitions for all pupils. Since joining the school, the headteacher has worked closely with staff to design an ambitious and interesting curriculum. Teachers have implemented a well-sequenced curriculum that helps pupils to build on their knowledge and skills, from Reception to Year 6. Leaders have focused on improving teaching through purposeful professional development. Effective teaching enables pupils to learn the intended curriculum. However, in a few subjects, teachers do not check what pupils have learned and remembered to help them connect with previous learning.

Reading is at the heart of the curriculum. As soon as children start in Reception, they are encouraged to learn letters and the sounds they represent. Since the previous inspection, leaders have introduced a new phonics scheme. Highly trained staff deliver this scheme with precision. Pupils read books that match the sounds they have learned, which helps them to develop fluency. Leaders are quick to spot any pupils who start to fall behind and give them the help that they need. Teachers read aloud to pupils, including books that promote being inclusive. Pupils are motivated by the whole school 'big book days' and the '100 book challenge'.

Pupils with SEND receive high-quality support to make sure they do well in their work. Leaders work closely with early years staff to identify children's needs from the outset. Staff continuously develop their own professional understanding by learning more about effective provision for pupils with SEND. As a result, teachers skilfully adapt learning experiences and give them the help they need to experience success.

Pupils behave very well, in and around the school. They have positive attitudes and want to do well. In early years, children settle quickly into routines and understand staff's expectations of them. All members of staff use the same words and actions to remind pupils about what is expected. As a result, the school is calm and orderly.

Leaders are proud of the personal, social, health and emotional curriculum. Staff deliver a well-designed programme that includes age-appropriate advice about relationships. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding is planned effectively to help them learn about different views, faiths and cultures. Through trips, wider clubs and visitors, they develop an understanding of the wider world. Pastoral care is exemplary. Staff with relevant experience provide therapeutic care for pupils in well-designed areas, such as the 'sensory room' and the 'kids' kitchen'. Leaders are committed to finding the best for every pupil. Pupils enjoy taking on positions of responsibility, such as well-being ambassadors and members of the pupil parliament. They are proud to contribute to their school community.

Governors know the school well and check the effectiveness of the quality of education. This helps them to prioritise staff development. They share leaders' high ambition for all pupils to enjoy learning, be confident and achieve well. Staff are very proud to work at this school. They say that leaders carefully consider their workload. There is a great team spirit, with staff supporting each other well. Parents speak highly of the school and one parent said, 'The sense of community is really strong within the school and something I'm proud to be a part of. Sevenoaks Primary is so much more than just a school.'

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders ensure that there is a strong safeguarding culture in the school. Staff have relevant up-to-date training, so they know how to identify any signs of concern. Leaders have developed strong relationships with external agencies to make sure that pupils are kept safe and families get the help and support they need. Governors monitor and challenge the school's safeguarding work.

Pupils know how to keep themselves safe in the real and online world. Staff and parents are confident that pupils are safe in school. One parent said, 'I am so pleased my children attend this school. Staff care deeply about children's mental health.'

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Teachers' assessment of pupils' learning is not well developed in a minority of subjects. This means that teachers are not able to finely tune what they teach, and pupils are not able to connect with and build on prior learning well enough. Leaders need to continue to develop assessment practice in these subjects so that pupils can learn equally well across the breadth of the curriculum.

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 school to be good in April 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](#)' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route.

School details

Unique reference number	118551
Local authority	Kent
Inspection number	10256497
Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	597
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Simon Leigh and James Neill (Co-chairs)
Headteacher	Cassandra Malone
Website	www.sevenoaks.kent.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	28 November 2017, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The current headteacher was appointed in January 2019. In January 2023, the co-chairs of governors were elected.
- The school uses one registered alternative provider.

Information about this inspection

- 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.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics, and computing. For each deep dive, the inspectors met with subject leaders, looked at curriculum plans, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. The inspectors also considered curriculum information and spoke to leaders about other subjects.
- During the inspection, meetings were held with the headteacher and members of the governing body, including one of the co-chairs of governors.

- The inspectors held a telephone conversation with a representative from the local authority.
- The views of parents, pupils and staff were considered through Ofsted's online surveys.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspector looked at the school's training records, considered other safeguarding documents, spoke with pupils and discussed safeguarding arrangements with staff.

Inspection team

David Harris, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Paul Bateman

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