

Inspection of a good school: Plaxtol Primary School

School Lane, Plaxtol, Sevenoaks, Kent TN15 0QD

Inspection date:

21 March 2023

Outcome

Plaxtol Primary School continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are well supported to become aspirational and independent learners in this welcoming school. Leaders create a nurturing environment, where pupils feel safe and are empowered to take risks in their learning. The needs of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are identified quickly. They are carefully considered, so that they can access the same curriculum and extra-curricular activities as their peers.

Leaders and staff have high expectations for pupils to achieve and behave well. Pupils work and play happily together in mixed-age classes. Children in Reception settle quickly into learning and behaviour routines. Pupils learn about tolerance and respect through a well-planned personal development curriculum. They are excited to be awarded the 'minerva cup' for demonstrating these behaviours. Some pupils report that bullying happens occasionally. However, teachers act quickly when it occurs.

Pupils benefit from an exciting range of trips and visits that enrich their learning of the curriculum. For example, Year 1 and 2 pupils enjoy a visit to the National Gallery to broaden their understanding of the 'living things' topic. Many pupils take part in clubs such as tri-golf, coding and dance, so that they can develop their talents and interests. Leaders focus carefully on ensuring that those who would benefit the most attend.

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

Leaders have designed an ambitious and interesting curriculum that is well suited to pupils' needs. The curriculum in each subject is well sequenced, so that pupils build progressively on the key knowledge that they must know. For example, pupils in Years 5 and 6 show how their knowledge of passing the ball with accuracy in tag rugby is applied in a game context. Children in the early years use their knowledge of how manipulatives work to choose and use them independently in mathematics.

Teachers use skilful questioning and recall activities to check for gaps in pupils' learning and address any misconceptions. They change their plans, so that pupils revisit topics where their knowledge is less secure. Pupils with SEND complete the same ambitious

work as their peers, although it may be adapted appropriately to suit their needs. Subject leaders carefully monitor how well the curriculum is enabling pupils to know and do more. They provide specialist support to staff, who are new or temporary, so that they develop expertise in delivering the curriculum.

Leaders have ensured that reading is at the heart of the curriculum. Children in Reception begin their phonics learning as soon as they begin school. Staff who deliver phonics follow the chosen scheme carefully and match books to the sounds that pupils have learned. Pupils who find reading more difficult receive daily support to help them keep up. Older pupils are confident and fluent readers, who enjoy reading for pleasure.

Children in the early years are cheerful and engage well in their learning. They are supported well to develop strong language and communication skills. Leaders have managed a range of challenges recently, including flood damage, that has prevented children having full access to the early years curriculum. Leaders do, however, have specific plans in place to address this as quickly as possible.

Pupils in all year groups are keen and curious to learn. They listen to their teachers carefully and work hard in class as they want to do their best. Pupils report that low-level disruption occurs very occasionally but learning is mostly uninterrupted. Some pupils do not come to school as often as they should. Leaders do not yet have a clear system in place to identify and tackle the attendance of specific groups of pupils who attend least.

Pupils learn about diversity and age-appropriate relationships through a well-sequenced personal development curriculum. However, some older pupils report that not all of their peers fully understand all types of diversity yet. Pupils develop a strong sense of social responsibility as house captains, eco-club leaders and librarians. They learn about the importance of community and citizenship, for example, through fundraising for those who have been affected by the earthquake in Syria and Turkey.

The headteacher has worked hard to ensure that gaps in staffing have not impacted on the smooth running of the school. Governors have a clear vision for the future of the school and are working with the headteacher to address any areas for improvement. Staff say that their well-being is a priority for leaders and that they are proud to work at the school.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Staff receive regular training, so that they know how to identify and report concerns swiftly. Leaders carry out detailed checks, so they are sure that all adults are safe to work in the school. Leaders know and monitor pupils who may be at risk well. However, on a small number of occasions, leaders have not communicated with external agencies to check if families can get any extra help and support that they might need. Recording of some behavioural incidents, including positive handling, is not yet as precise as it should be.

Pupils feel safe in school. They know who they can talk to if they are worried and are confident that adults will take their concerns seriously.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Although leaders monitor pupils that they are concerned about closely, on a small number of occasions, leaders have not sought advice from external agencies to ensure that pupils and their families get any extra support that they might need. Those in charge of safeguarding need to communicate more frequently with the local authority, and the families concerned, to make sure that pupils consistently receive the full amount of help that they may be entitled to.
- Although occurrences are infrequent, leaders do not currently have clear systems in place to record more serious behavioural incidents, including when positive handling is used. Leaders need to ensure that record-keeping is more precise, so that repeated incidents, and the impact of any actions taken by the school, can be monitored more effectively.
- The attendance of specific groups of pupils who do not attend school frequently is not yet systematically monitored. Leaders need to ensure that they regularly review attendance data, so that the systems that they already have in place to address poor attendance are more impactful.

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 February 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	118309
Local authority	Kent
Inspection number	10268972
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	95
Appropriate authority	The Local authority
Chair of governing body	Kim Johnson
Headteacher	Claire Rowley
Website	http://www.plaxtol.kent.sch.uk/
Date of previous inspection	1 February 2018, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school does not use any alternative provision.
- There is a breakfast club run by the school on site.

Information about this inspection

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID 19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- The inspectors completed deep dives in the following subjects: early reading, mathematics and physical education. This included meeting with subject leaders and talking with staff and pupils. The inspectors also visited lessons and looked at pupils' work.
- Inspectors scrutinised a range of documents, including leaders' evaluation of the school and priorities for improvement. They met with the headteacher, a selection of subject leaders, teachers, and support staff.

- During the inspection, the lead inspector spoke with the school's local authority improvement partner, and met with members of the governing body, including the chair.
- The arrangements for safeguarding were reviewed by scrutinising records, and through discussions with staff and pupils.
- The inspectors observed pupils' behaviour in class and at other times of the day.
- The views of pupils, parents, and staff were considered through discussions and a review of Ofsted's surveys.

Inspection team

Zoë Harris, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Toby Martlew

Ofsted Inspector

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