

Inspection of a school judged good for overall effectiveness before September 2024: R A Butler Infant School

South Road, Saffron Walden, Essex CB11 3DG

Inspection dates:

5 and 6 November 2024

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 Emma Vincent. This school is part of Saffron Academy Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer (CEO), Caroline Derbyshire, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by David Barrs. The headteacher is also the executive headteacher, who is responsible for this school and one other.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are extremely happy here. It is a school where pupils thrive. This includes children in the early years and those pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Pupils know that adults want the very best for them. The inclusive, calm and harmonious environment helps pupils feel safe and well cared for.

The school is incredibly ambitious for all pupils. Pupils have high attendance and develop a passion for learning. They achieve extremely well across a range of subjects. Pupils say lessons are the best part of school. They are curious and confident learners who talk about their work with immense pride.

Pupils' behaviour in and beyond the classroom is exemplary. Pupils are extremely polite, courteous and friendly to each other. They work hard to demonstrate the school's values of the '6Rs' during their daily school life. They care and look out for others. There are warm and respectful relationships between everyone. The school offers an extensive range of clubs including gardening, karate and hockey. Pupils make full use of them.

There are strong, trusting relationships between families and the school. Pupils and their parents and carers would unreservedly recommend the school to others.

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

The school prioritises reading from the moment children start in the Reception Year. The phonics programme is taught to an exceptionally high standard. Well-trained staff have expert subject knowledge. Children and pupils quickly learn the sounds and letters that they need to read. They are confident in applying strategies to read accurately. Staff use frequent checks to identify anyone who is at risk of falling behind. These pupils receive effective, additional support to ensure they keep up. Pupils develop a love of reading. They understand the difference between fiction and non-fiction texts.

The school's curriculum is highly ambitious and well developed. The school has given careful thought to the knowledge that it wants pupils to know and remember. Staff ensure pupils have opportunities to practise and apply what they have been learning. As a result, pupils know and remember lots of what they have been taught. Pupils gain a secure body of knowledge by the end of Year 2.

The school puts a great emphasis on ensuring that staff access a variety of training. This gives them the expertise and confidence to deliver the curriculum effectively. This training includes working with staff from across the trust. As a result, staff have strong subject knowledge and teach the curriculum very well. Staff carefully check that pupils are learning what they want them to. They are quick to pick up if a pupil has developed a misconception.

Children in the Reception Year have an extremely positive start to their education. Adults promote and model high-quality language. Children develop their confidence and independence in the well-resourced environments. They learn how to manage their emotions, negotiate and compromise.

Pupils with SEND play a full and active part in the school. The school identifies pupils' individual needs promptly. Staff are given the information and guidance that they need to make sure that pupils with SEND receive effective support that meets their needs. Pupils with SEND learn the same rich, ambitious curriculum as their peers. Those with the most complex needs receive a bespoke programme with high levels of support. Pupils with SEND achieve exceptionally well from their various starting points.

Pupils are very proud of their school and have highly positive attitudes to learning. They settle down quickly to get on with work. Classrooms are a buzz of learning. Pupils know they are expected to concentrate and try their best. This is exactly what they do. The school closely tracks pupils' attendance. It takes swift and effective action if attendance dips. As a result of this work, pupils' attendance is high.

The school's programme for personal development is well considered. The school places teaching pupils about equality at the heart of its work. Pupils are taught sensitively about religions, relationships and staying safe online. There is a wealth of opportunities for pupils to develop their understanding of the world beyond Saffron Walden. Pupils are confident to share their own opinions, feelings and ideas. They know that they will be listened to. Pupils are taught about discrimination and diversity, and to accept difference.

For example, staff make sure that pupils understand that some of their peers may need additional support and that this is okay.

The governing body is effective. It has the expertise to be able to challenge and support the school to achieve its ambitions. Governors visit the school regularly to check on safeguarding, pupils' learning and the well-being of staff.

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 April 2015.

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	136325
Local authority	Essex
Inspection number	10338969
Type of school	Infant
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	4 to 7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	270
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	David Barrs
CEO of the trust	Caroline Derbyshire
Headteacher	Emma Vincent
Website	www.rab.academy
Date of previous inspection	7 March 2019, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school is part of Saffron Academy Trust.
- The school does not use any alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

- Inspections are a point-in-time evaluation about the quality of the 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.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspector reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of leaders, staff, pupils and parents; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.

- The inspector visited a sample of lessons, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. They also heard pupils read to a familiar adult.
- The inspector spoke with the headteacher, deputy headteachers and other senior leaders, including the special educational needs and disabilities coordinator. They also spoke to subject leaders, teachers and support staff.
- The inspector met with leaders and teachers to talk about the curriculum, workload and the behaviour and personal development of pupils.
- The inspector met with members of the local governing board and trustees, including the CEO of the trust.
- The inspector considered a range of documents, including the school's plans for improvement and minutes of meetings of the local governing body.
- The inspector observed the behaviour of pupils during lessons, around the school and on the playground. They looked at behaviour and attendance records and considered leaders' analysis of these.
- The inspector considered the online responses to Ofsted Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire for parents, as well as the free-text comments. They also considered responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire for staff.

Inspection team

Karen Stanton, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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