Inspection of a good school: R A Butler Junior School

South Road, Saffron Walden, Essex CB11 3DG

Inspection dates: 22 and 23 November 2022

Outcome

R A Butler Junior School continues to be a good school. There is enough evidence of improved performance to suggest that the school could be judged outstanding if we were to carry out a graded (section 5) inspection now. The school's next inspection will be a graded inspection.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils at R A Butler Junior receive an education based on the school's ethos that is built on 'respectful relationships'. Pupils experience a rich curriculum that focuses on the world around them. Pupils are friendly and happy, and achieve well. They are exceptionally well prepared for the future.

Pupils' behaviour and attitudes are exemplary. They have high expectations of themselves and others. Alongside this, pupils show empathy. They recognise the similarities of each other and the differences in their home lives. They understand that some of their friends have overcome difficulties.

Pupils access an extensive range of sporting and creative opportunities. This helps pupils to develop their interests and talents to a high standard.

Bullying rarely happens. Pupils express confidently that if it does, an adult will deal with it. Pupils feel safe. This view is backed up by staff and parents.

Pupils take on leadership roles that make a difference to their school. Pupils have a strong understanding that their actions have consequences, that they take very seriously. Pupils take part in the whole school council. This enables pupils to debate a current issue which enhances their understanding of different points of view.

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

Leaders have designed an aspirational curriculum. Leaders ensure that speaking is a core feature of all lessons. Pupils are taught to say, build, draw and write their learning across the curriculum. This chosen approach is supporting pupils to remember earlier concepts and knowledge taught.

Staff are relentless in enabling all pupils to achieve their very best. Leaders make sure that all staff receive training and support so that they have strong subject knowledge. Teachers use assessments well to check pupils' understanding in lessons. During each lesson, pupils access a 'masterclass' if a new concept needs further clarification. This ensures any confusion is sorted out straight away and that all pupils learn successfully.

The reading curriculum ensures that skills and concepts are explicitly taught and understood by pupils. Pupils spoken to were able to remember in detail the texts their teachers had read to them over time. Pupils delight in receiving book recommendations and are confident to read aloud. Pupils know that their public speaking events help them to read with expression.

Leaders and staff are aware of pupils' needs. They are skilled at identifying pupils who may have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Pupils with SEND are supported extremely well to achieve their personalised targets. Among other strategies, leaders employ a counsellor to help support well-being. Staff ensure there is a 'sense of belonging' for these pupils. They are included in all aspects of school life alongside their peers. Leaders make sure pupils with SEND attend clubs and are represented on the various student bodies.

The attitudes of pupils are exceptional. There are no incidents of low-level disruptive behaviour. Pupils demonstrate high levels of engagement and control. They have high expectations of themselves and others. Pupils are self-motivated to do the right thing. Additionally, they work hard to gain rewards, for example when completing their reading challenges.

Leaders have developed an extensive range of extra-curricular opportunities for pupil to take part in. The school is a hive of activity from morning to evening, with clubs that support pupils' physical and mental well-being. Parents are overwhelmingly positive about these and without exception would recommend the school.

Pupils are confident in talking about respecting all pupils' rights. They were less knowledgeable about specific faiths, religions and celebrations, apart from Islam. The curriculum delivery does not ensure pupils have a detailed understanding of a range of cultures and faiths.

Governors and trustees are committed to ensuring all pupils receive the highest quality of education possible. They use the strengths of the staff to support other schools in the trust, while considering staff's workload and well-being. Governors and trustees hold leaders to account to make sure pupils of all backgrounds and abilities excel.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders are tenacious in their approach to making sure all pupils are kept safe. Staff receive effective training so that they are confident to identify any pupils who may be at

risk of harm, and to report concerns. Record-keeping is detailed and analysed alongside other information about vulnerable pupils.
Governors check safeguarding arrangements thoroughly. Recruitment checks on staff and visitors are carried out appropriately.

Pupils are taught to share any worries with trusted adults. The personal, social and health education curriculum equips pupils with the knowledge to keep themselves and others safe, including when online.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Pupils are less confident in discussing the detail of celebrations of other faiths and religions compared to Islam. Leaders must ensure the planned curriculum is delivered with greater clarity to ensure pupils understand a range of faiths and their associated beliefs and traditions. Leaders must ensure pupils are articulate about the similarities and differences they have learned and have an equally high standard of knowledge and awareness across a range of cultures and faiths.

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 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' 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	136328
Local authority	Essex
Inspection number	10255182
Type of school	Junior
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	7 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	365
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	David Barrs
Headteacher	Emma Vincent
Website	www.rabutleracademy.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	6 June 2017, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- R A Butler Junior school has been part of the Saffron Academy Trust since 2010.
- The headteacher is also the headteacher of R A Butler Infant school which shares the same site.
- Pupils from both schools can attend the before- and after-school provision on site. This is managed separately and is subject to a separate inspection.
- Leaders do not use alternative providers.

Information about this inspection

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. The inspector discussed the impact of the pandemic with school leaders and has taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- The inspector held meetings with the headteacher, the deputy headteachers and the director of primary school improvement for the trust.

- The inspector met with five members of the governing body, including the chair of the governing body. Meetings were also held with the chief executive officer (CEO) and the deputy CEO of the trust.
- The inspector carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics and design technology. For each deep dive, the inspector met with subject leaders, looked at curriculum documentation, visited a sample of lessons, spoke with teachers, spoke with pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- To evaluate the school's safeguarding practice the inspector met with one of the deputy headteachers, who is the school's designated safeguarding leader, the headteacher's personal assistant and some other staff.
- A range of documentation was scrutinised during the inspection, including curriculum plans, school development plans, and safeguarding and behaviour records.
- The inspector spoke with groups of pupils about their experiences of school life and their learning in lessons to understand what it is like to be a pupil in their school. Inspectors also observed the behaviour of pupils across the school site.
- The inspector considered the 173 responses to Ofsted's online survey, Ofsted Parent View, and the 172 free-text comments. The inspector also took account of the 44 responses to Ofsted's online staff survey. There were no responses to Ofsted's online pupil survey.

Inspection team

Isabel Davis, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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