

Inspection of a good school: Sonning Common Primary School

Grove Road, Sonning Common, Reading, Berkshire RG4 9RJ

Inspection dates:

12 and 13 September 2023

Outcome

Sonning Common Primary School continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

The school is a kind and respectful community. These values permeate through the school's provision. Pupils are caring and helpful and can express how they feel included and welcomed. Younger pupils look forward to reading and playing with their Year 6 buddies. All pupils take pride in the way the school includes them in decision making. Pupils describe their influential role and the positive changes that have been made through the school and eco councils.

Pupils are keen to come to school to learn. They are polite and friendly towards each other and staff and are welcoming to visitors. In lessons the atmosphere is calm. Pupils are diligent and they know that their teachers will be kind and will give them help when needed.

Pupils value the very broad range of extra-curricular activities that the school offers them. Inspiring visitors help pupils think about their future careers. Extra visits from children's comedians, scientists and professional sports people widen pupils' knowledge of the world. These shared experiences reinforce pupils' connection with each other and their school community.

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

Across the school, staff strive to consistently implement the school's carefully considered vision. Because of this, pupils understand what is expected of them each day and they focus on their learning. Teachers know individual pupils well. Adaptation for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are effective. This enables pupils with SEND to learn successfully alongside their peers. Careful planning of additional support minimises time away from the classroom. As a result, pupils with SEND achieve well.

Behaviour in lessons and around the school is happy and joyful. Pupils value the time they have with their friends and look forward to playing with them and eating together. Pupils are familiar with the way the school's behaviour policy works. Teachers are consistent in

the language they use when teaching pupils the expectations of how to behave. Effective use of rewards strengthens pupils' understanding of the school values. Values wristbands can be earned by consistently exhibiting the school's five values. Many pupils are proud to have a full set, including the coveted rainbow band.

Staff have worked collaboratively to redevelop the curriculum across the different subjects that are offered. This has included ensuring what pupils will learn from the Reception Year through to Year 6 is carefully considered and ordered. Staff recognise the importance of foundational learning in the early years. Children begin to develop their mathematical and reading confidence and fluency through carefully designed activities as soon as they join the school. These opportunities also help to develop children's language and communication. In all year groups, teachers are knowledgeable and have received detailed training on how to teach the individual subjects. However, in some of the foundation subjects, pupils do not always have the knowledge and confidence to apply the information and vocabulary they have been taught. This means they have gaps in their understanding and that their knowledge does not build as well as it could, from one year to the next.

Reading is a joy to many pupils. The teaching of phonics is well developed. The routines and techniques which pupils are taught when learning to read are consistently used across all year groups. This means that pupils can build on their previous learning. Targeted support helps pupils who find learning to read more difficult. Extra sessions and expert staff sensitively build pupils' confidence. The school communicates with parents about how to help their children learn to read. Pupils also benefit from borrowing books from the local public library that adjoins the school. They value the librarian's recommendations and the books on display. The school considers reading in all forms to be valuable. Class sets of joke books and sports programmes join topic reading and formal texts to expand pupils' experience of the written word.

Pupils understanding of the world around them is broadened by an interesting range of experiences. Regular trips and visitors enrich pupils' education. Many pupils and parents consider this to be one of the best aspects of the school. Any financial or other barriers that may limit a pupil's participation are quickly identified and overcome. This reflects the school's thoughtful and inclusive approach in providing support for all pupils.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In some subjects, the school has not yet identified some of the specific knowledge and vocabulary that pupils will learn. This means that pupils are less secure in applying subject knowledge to explore and deepen their understanding. The school should ensure that this precise knowledge is identified across all subjects to embed the curriculum across the school.

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 December 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](#)' 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	123038
Local authority	Oxfordshire
Inspection number	10287935
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	373
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Keith Settle
Headteacher	Chris Hirst
Website	http://sonningcommonprimary.co.uk/
Date of previous inspection	8 March 2018, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school offers a morning breakfast club and after-school club for pupils that is run by the school.
- The school currently uses two unregistered alternative providers.

Information about this inspection

- Inspections are a point-in-time judgement about the quality of a school's education provision.
- This was the first routine inspection of the school since the COVID-19 pandemic began. The inspector discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and has taken that into account in his evaluation of the school.
- The inspector held meetings with the headteacher, special educational needs and disabilities coordinator, early years leader, curriculum leaders, and other staff.
- The inspector met with governors, including the chair of governors. He talked to a local authority representative and representative from the diocese.
- The inspector carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics and art and design. For each deep dive, the inspector met with subject leaders, looked at curriculum plans, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to pupils about

their learning, and looked at samples of pupils' work. The inspector listened to a sample of pupils read.

- The inspector examined a range of documentation provided by the school, including leaders' self-evaluation and improvement plans.
- 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 survey, Ofsted Parent View. He also took into consideration the responses to the confidential staff and pupil surveys.

Inspection team

Ed Mather, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

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