

Inspection of a good school: Sedley's Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School

Church Street, Southfleet, Gravesend, Kent, DA13 9NR

Inspection date:

3 November 2021

Outcome

There has been no change to this school's overall judgement of good as a result of this initial (section 8) inspection. However, the evidence gathered suggests that the inspection grade might not be as high if a full inspection were carried out now. The next inspection will therefore be a full (section 5) inspection.

What is it like to attend this school?

There is a strong sense of history and community spirit at this small village school. Pupils are happy and keen to attend. They enjoy their friendships and are kind to each other. They feel safe. Pupils show a mature understanding of the school's vision 'Love to Learn, Learn to Love.' Parents are supportive and positive about the school's work.

Pupils' behaviour, on the whole, is commendable. Pupils are polite and respectful to each other as well as to adults. They have a good understanding of the rules and follow these well.

Older pupils enjoy the many leadership responsibilities they have, such as being a prefect, house captain or head boy or girl. They undertake their duties with enthusiasm. The youngest children settle into school happily. Across all ages, pupils learn and play harmoniously together.

However, the many changes to leadership and staffing in recent years have had a detrimental impact on the quality of education. New leadership, with the support of Aletheia Anglican Academies Trust (AAAT), is now beginning to bring in the many improvements needed. There remains work to do to develop the school's curriculum and leadership across all subjects and raise expectations of what pupils can do.

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

All pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) study a broad range of subjects. Work is currently underway to ensure that the curriculum is carefully considered. Leaders are identifying the important knowledge they want pupils to

know and the order in which this should be taught. This applies to all subjects, including English and mathematics. In recent years there has been very little monitoring of teachers' planning or pupils' work. A lack of effective subject leadership is currently stalling progress in this area of the school's work. However, leaders have made this a top priority.

Leaders know that there is not a consistent approach to the teaching of early reading. They have begun to address this issue. Leaders have recently put in place a structured phonics programme and invested in appropriate books so that pupils can practise the sounds they are learning. Some staff have had recent training to improve their confidence when teaching pupils to read. Leaders do not have oversight of pupils who have fallen behind with their reading. Support for these pupils is inconsistent and they do not always receive the precise help they need to catch up.

Overall, classrooms are calm and purposeful. Pupils listen attentively to their teachers. However, there are occasions when pupils lose concentration in lessons. This is when teachers do not focus clearly enough on what they want pupils to learn.

The small number of pupils with SEND receive appropriate support for their pastoral or physical needs. Governors, too, keep a close eye on provision for this group of pupils and monitor how they are doing. However, weaknesses in the quality of the school's curriculum mean that these pupils, along with their peers, do not achieve well enough.

Children get off to a strong start in Reception. Expectations for what they can achieve are high. Adults' careful questioning helps to develop children's learning. Interesting activities support children in developing their knowledge. For example, during the inspection children investigated different shapes and delighted in joining in with 'the shape song'.

Leaders provide pupils with opportunities to support their broader and personal development. Pupils enjoy extra-curricular activities such as taking part in sporting clubs and competitions as well as choir, and computer and circus skills clubs. The nearby church is regularly used to celebrate Christian festivals and pupils actively participate in raising money for charities. Nonetheless, leaders recognise that they now need to maximise opportunities for pupils' wider development within the curriculum.

Leaders, including governors, are determined that the cycle of constant change over recent years should be halted so that stability can be restored. To this end, intended arrangements with the trust have been agreed and are in the process of being formalised. The trust is currently supporting the school. Trust leaders show much moral purpose and determination to bring about the necessary improvements. They have seconded staff from other schools within the trust to strengthen teaching and leadership. In light of the many changes, staff morale is understandably low. Leaders are mindful of the need to carefully consider the impact of new initiatives on staff workload. However, all staff spoken to, as well as parents, feel optimistic that new leaders are bringing about positive change.

In discussion with the headteacher, the inspectors agreed that the teaching of reading, and curriculum planning of the foundation subjects, including in early years, may usefully serve as a focus for the next inspection.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

There is a culture of care and vigilance at this small school. Staff know pupils well and are alert to any risks. They understand how to report and escalate concerns they may have. Leaders ensure that staff are well trained in safeguarding matters and carry out the appropriate recruitment checks on adults who work at the school.

Leaders work closely with external agencies, families and pupils who require extra support. Strong relationships as well as improved and effective communication ensure that pupils are kept safe.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The curriculum is not coherently planned and sequenced in all subjects, including English. Consequently, pupils do not achieve well enough. Leaders should ensure that each subject is carefully planned and sequenced from Reception to Year 6 and that the curriculum meets the needs of all pupils, including those with SEND. These plans should identify the knowledge that leaders want pupils to learn and remember.
- Reading is not taught well in the school and many staff have not had recent, relevant training. This means that pupils are not achieving well enough. Leaders need to ensure that all staff receive timely, relevant training to improve their expertise. They need to ensure that the school's new phonics programme is implemented consistently well, including for those pupils who need to catch up.
- Subject leadership is currently at an early stage of development. Most leaders do not have a good understanding of their areas of responsibility. This means that they are not yet able to contribute fully to school improvement and ensure that the curriculum enables all pupils to achieve well. Senior leaders should develop and support subject leaders so that they understand their areas of responsibility and can fulfil their roles effectively.

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 a section 8 inspection of a good or outstanding school, because it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on a section 8 inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school would now receive a higher or lower grade, then the next inspection will be a section 5 inspection. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the section 8 inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the section 8 inspection as a section 5 inspection immediately.

This is the second section 8 inspection since we judged the school to be good in September 2011.

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.

If you are the school and you are not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

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	118595
Local authority	Kent
Inspection number	10200297
Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	94
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Sarah Humphreys
Headteacher	Jayne Field (Acting Head of School)
Website	www.sedleys.kent.sch.uk/
Date of previous inspection	2 November 2016, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- This school is smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- The school is a voluntary aided Church of England School in the Diocese of Rochester. The most recent Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist schools (SIAMS) took place at the school on 24 November 2016. The school's next inspection is due to take place by the end of this school year. However, this is likely to be delayed because of the pandemic.
- The school does not currently use any alternative provision.

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 school leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation.
- Inspectors met with senior leaders, staff and pupils. They also met with four members of the governing body including the chair and vice-chair.
- The lead inspector had a telephone conversation with a representative from the local authority.

- The lead inspector met with the chief executive officer of the AAAT, which is currently supporting the school.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: reading, mathematics and geography. For each deep dive, inspectors met with subject leaders, looked at curriculum plans where these were available, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. Inspectors also listened to some pupils read.
- Inspectors met with school leaders and looked at planning and pupils' work in a range of subjects.
- Inspectors reviewed the school's safeguarding arrangements. They looked at relevant documentation and staff recruitment checks.
- Inspectors took account of the 29 responses to the Ofsted Parent View survey and spoke to three parents at the end of the school day. Inspectors also considered 13 replies to Ofsted's confidential staff survey and considered staff's views during meetings.
- Inspectors considered pupils' views during meetings with them and talked with pupils informally at different times of the school day.

Inspection team

Frances Nation, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Andrew Hogarth

Ofsted Inspector

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