Inspection of a good school: Ongar Primary School

Milton Crescent, Shelley, Ongar, Essex CM5 0FF

Inspection dates: 26 and 27 September 2023

Outcome

Ongar Primary School continues to be a good school.

The headteacher of this school is Debbie Attridge. This school is part of Bridge 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, Mark Farmer, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Keith Mogford.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils try hard to embody the school's three rights: the right to safety, the right to respect and the right to learn. Following these every day helps pupils to achieve well, both in and out of the classroom.

The school works hard to keep pupils safe, tenaciously securing suitable support. Pupils benefit greatly from how the school grounds allow for 'risky' play. Pupils can build dens, climb trees or haul themselves onto large tyres. Unsurprisingly, pupils highlight outdoor learning and play as a strength at their school.

Being respectful is seen in pupils' typically cheerful conduct. Because they are kind and tolerant, talking about how people and families differ does not faze them. Pupils themselves can identify how behaviour has improved in recent years. Class-based rewards incentivise pupils to behave well.

Pupils appreciate how the school values their right to learn. The 'toolkits' provide step-by-step instructions which help pupils to succeed. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) benefit from kind, patient support, for example a listening ear to help talk through a problem so a pupil may then refocus on the task at hand.

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

Under the watchful eye of leaders who govern the school, the school has continued to improve over recent years. There is a patient, welcoming feel that fills the school. It ensures that staff feel comfortable approaching leaders to ask questions, give suggestions or request support. Training opportunities, such as the trust's subject leader network

meetings, provide helpful guidance. Staff value these, seeing school as a place where they receive support to thrive.

The school adopts a systematic approach to the teaching of reading. Training for staff ensures they are well versed, for example, in the sounds that letters make. Staff prioritise the school's four features of fluent reading. This helps pupils to read with expression as they grow older. Like all pupils, weaker readers receive books containing words they can read. This, along with guidance from staff, helps them to become increasingly confident.

The school has high-quality curriculum packages that set out, in detail, what pupils will learn. Staff relish these packages. They come with online training videos and clearly sequenced lessons. It gives them the confidence to teach concepts correctly. In addition, it gives them the time to focus on finding or producing resources that best meet pupils' differing learning needs.

In most lessons, there is a strong link between the teacher's demonstration and the work pupils then complete. This sets pupils up for success. At times, there are issues in the teaching instruction and its link to the work set. For example, if a teacher's explanation is lengthy, pupils' attention wanes, and teachers are slow to notice and address this. It then hinders pupils from remembering information and starting their work quickly to give them enough opportunity for practice.

Pupils with SEND receive much in the way of care and learning support. There is careful consideration as to what adjustments are best. For example, pupils can use electronic devices to rewatch a video of the teacher's explanation. This encourages pupils to complete their work independently. Leaders help staff to break down long-term targets on pupils' education, health and care plans. Having short-term, focused targets keeps them relevant. They help pupils and their parents to see the progress being made. Parents appreciate the time leaders and staff set aside to keep them in the loop with what is in place to meet their child's specific needs.

Pupils' behaviour and attendance are an ever-improving picture. In the first instance, the school works sympathetically to address issues, for example reminding pupils privately when their conduct does not meet expectations. If support proves unsuccessful, the school seeks external advice to then provide swift and effective action to address the issues.

The programme around pupils' wider development is broad. Staff kindly facilitate a range of extra-curricular clubs. These include arts and crafts, cross-country and computing. The '10 Promises' introduce pupils to experiences they may not otherwise encounter, such as a trip to the theatre or a canal boat ride. The two residential trips get pupils to explore the outdoors and develop their independence ahead of starting secondary school. Alongside caring and attentive staff, there are trained professionals who work in school. They provide advice, counselling and parent workshops. The school selects the focus for these, ensuring they meet the community's needs.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Occasionally, the instructions pupils receive lack clarity. As a result, pupils may misunderstand what is expected of them regarding their conduct and/or learning. These misunderstandings are not put right quickly enough. The trust and the school should provide the training and support that ensures all pupils receive clear explanations that help them to learn new content efficiently and securely.

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 first ungraded inspection since we judged the predecessor school, Shelley Primary School, to be good in April 2016.

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	146230
Local authority	Essex
Inspection number	10255148
Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	168
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Keith Mogford
Headteacher	Debbie Attridge
Website	www.ongarprimaryschool.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- Ongar Primary School converted to become an academy school in September 2018. When its predecessor school, Shelley Primary School, was last inspected by Ofsted, it was judged to be good overall.
- There is a separately registered and inspected early years provider on the same site as the school. It offers nursery provision to children aged two to four.
- The school does not make use of any alternative provision.

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 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 his evaluation of the school.
- The inspector held meetings with leaders, including the chief executive officer of the trust, the primary director, two local governors, the headteacher, the deputy headteacher and the special educational needs coordinator.

- The inspector carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics and art. For each deep dive, the inspector discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to staff, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. The inspector also listened to a sample of pupils read to a familiar adult.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspector: reviewed the single central record; examined safeguarding records; 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 reviewed a range of documentation, including school policies, the school development plan, the self-evaluation form, minutes from meetings of the trust board and local governing body, and reports from reviews of the school carried out by the trust.
- The inspector spoke with pupils to gather their views. The inspector also took account of the 30 responses to Ofsted's pupil survey.
- The inspector gathered parents' views by reviewing the 34 responses, including 30 free-text responses, submitted to the online survey, Ofsted Parent View.
- The inspector gathered the views of staff by speaking to several of them and reviewing the 16 responses to Ofsted's staff survey.

Inspection team

Daniel Short, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector

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