Inspection of a good school: Sedlescombe Church of England Primary School

Brede Lane, Sedlescombe, Battle, East Sussex TN33 0RQ

Inspection dates: 15 and 16 November 2023

Outcome

There has been no change to this school's overall judgement of good as a result of this ungraded (section 8) inspection. However, the evidence gathered suggests that the inspection grade might be outstanding if a graded (section 5) inspection were carried out now. The school's next inspection will be a graded inspection.

The headteacher of this school is Caroline Harvey. This school is part of the Diocese of Chichester 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 Talbot, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Archdeacon Luke Irvine-Capel.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils at Sedlescombe Church of England Primary School benefit from inspiring learning experiences. The curriculum ensures that every pupil feels a sense of belonging and can identify themselves in the range of stories, texts and topics that they encounter. Right from the start, pupils become curious and eager learners. Expectations for learning are high and pupils do all that they can to meet and exceed the challenges set.

Pupils are kind and understanding. Their behaviour is positive in classrooms and around the school. All members of the school community treat each other with respect. Newcomers are welcomed. Pupils of all ages work together, play together, and look after one another well. The oldest pupils particularly enjoy acting as 'buddies' to the youngest pupils in school 'so we know they always have a friend'.

There is a strong sense of community. Pupils in classes collaborate well and earn 'party points'. When enough points have been collected, pupils agree on a class party theme. The atmosphere is one of care and compassion. Pupils know that they can turn to any adult for support if needed. Pupils thrive and enjoy all aspects of school life because they feel safe, happy and secure.

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

Pupils at Sedlescombe learn to read well. Staff are confident to teach reading. They receive effective training and expert support. The younger pupils in school practise phonics skills and read aloud daily. All pupils read books precisely matched to the sounds that they know. Pupils who require extra support in learning to read receive the help they need to keep up, or to catch up.

Reading for pleasure is prioritised. Pupils love books, literature and reading. The school provides many opportunities for pupils to listen to stories, as well as to meet authors in real life. Year 5 'reader-leaders' run the school libraries and help others to select books. The school routinely recommends books for pupils and their families, via termly 'Rich Read Recommendations' newsletters. The school's reading culture is strongly embedded and highly effective. Consequently, pupils develop a rich, wide vocabulary and their learning across the breadth of the curriculum is extended. For example, by the time they are in Year 6, pupils' writing is of exceptional quality.

Curriculums are devised in detail by the subject leaders. Each subject's planning identifies precisely what pupils should learn. Planning makes links to previous and future learning and includes suggestions for key questions and resources. Teachers have exactly the information they need to teach pupils the right knowledge, in the right order. The curriculum flows from year to year, building and securing pupils' knowledge. The school's curriculum prioritises diversity. Through carefully selected texts, offering 'mirrors, windows and sliding doors' pupils learn about similarities and differences in people, cultures, and the wider world. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is supported exceptionally well through the academic curriculum and wider provision.

Pupils have extensive opportunities for personal development as detailed in the '50 things to do before you leave Sedlescombe School' document. For example, planned experiences in Reception include meeting a police officer, observing an egg hatch and visiting a zoo. Year 4 pupils experience a sleepover at school and Year 6 pupils undertake a residential visit.

The school has a deeply inclusive ethos. Classrooms are environments in which pupils' individual needs are routinely considered, planned for and responded to. Teachers use informal and formal assessments well to check pupils' understanding and to adjust learning tasks accordingly. If a pupil has significant special educational needs and/or disabilities, expert advice is sought and implemented.

Pupils are aspirational and persevere well with their learning. They work successfully in pairs or groups and respond readily to their teachers' instructions. A minority of pupils are absent from school too often. The school routinely considers causes of absence. Diverse strategies are helping to secure and sustain better attendance.

Published data for 2023 does not reflect fully the high standards currently being achieved. Reasons for this include a small cohort, pupil mobility, proportions of pupils with special educational needs and disabilities, and the impact of staff changes. The school has benefited from joining the trust. Support for staff to extend their expertise has positively

impacted the quality of education. Trust systems for oversight, communication and accountability work well. With maximum delegation from the trust, the local governing body plays a key role in supporting and holding the school to account.

Staff are happy working at the school. They know that their workload and well-being is routinely considered. Typically, parents are extremely happy with the school. Most parents who completed Ofsted Parent View survey added written feedback. Reflecting the views of many, one parent wrote, 'The phrase small but mighty seems fitting….my children are flourishing.'

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

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 predecessor school, Sedlescombe Church of England Primary School, to be good in March 2012.

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 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	147996
Local authority	East Sussex
Inspection number	10288092
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	197
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Archdeacon Luke Irvine-Capel
CEO of the trust	Mark Talbot
Headteacher	Caroline Harvey
Website	www.sedlescombecep.e-sussex.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- Sedlescombe Church of England Primary School converted to become an academy school in December 2020. When its predecessor school, Sedlescombe Church of England Primary School, was last inspected by Ofsted, it was judged to be good overall.
- Since the predecessor school's last full inspection, the school has joined the Diocese of Chichester Academy Trust. The trust delegates responsibility to a local governing body.
- Sedlescombe is a Church of England primary school with a strong Christian ethos. The school's Christian values of aspiration, honesty, forgiveness, courage, thankfulness and kindness underpin the school's work.
- As a Church of England primary school, the school also receives a specialist church inspection. The most recent church inspection took place in November 2017. The next church inspection will take place during the academic year 2024/2025.
- Since the previous full inspection, there have been changes in staffing. Changes include the headteacher and other senior leaders.
- The school currently uses no 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 her evaluation of the school.
- The inspector met with the headteacher, the acting deputy headteacher, other senior leaders, staff and pupils. The inspector also met with representatives of the trust, including the chief executive officer, a representative of the diocese, and with members of the local governing body.
- The inspector carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, English, history and mathematics. For each deep dive, the inspector held discussions about the curriculum, visited samples of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. The inspector also listened to pupils reading aloud to a known adult.
- 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 reviewed a wide range of documents provided by the school. These included the school's self-evaluation document, the school improvement plan, minutes of local governing body meetings and trust academy improvement review documentation.
- The inspector held meetings, and conversations, with staff and pupils and took their experiences of school life into account. The views of 72 parents and carers were considered through Ofsted's online survey.

Inspection team

Hilary Macdonald, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector

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