

Inspection of a good school: Rattlesden Church of England Primary Academy

School Road, Rattlesden, Bury St Edmunds, Suffolk IP30 0SE

Inspection date:

15 May 2024

Outcome

Rattlesden Church of England Primary Academy continues to be a good school.

The headteacher of this school is Helen Ballam. This school is part of the Thedwastre Education Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer, Phil MacKay, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Gary McDonald.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils love attending this happy and nurturing school. Pupils and their families are overwhelmingly positive about the school and love the close-knit family feel. Every pupil is encouraged to 'Believe, Embrace and Shine Together!'

Pupils live up to the school's high expectations to achieve their very best. Pupils typically perform well in a broad range of subjects. Their achievement in early reading and mathematics are particularly high.

Pupils behave exceptionally well and fully engage with their learning. They feel very well supported and cared for by staff. Pupils know that it is important to tell their teachers if anything is worrying them. They know staff will listen.

The voice of pupils is at the heart of this school. Older pupils take on a range of responsibilities to develop their confidence and leadership skills. The recently introduced 'E-safety Cadets' support the school's message of how to stay safe. Pupils lead assemblies and lessons for others to ensure everybody knows how to keep themselves safe online.

Pupils benefit from the varied extra-curricular activities and clubs provided. The sporting offer is particularly strong. All pupils can attend. Pupils also compete regularly. They have earned awards for both participation and competition success.

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

The school has a clearly set out curriculum. It builds pupils' knowledge step by step and is

age appropriate. The mixed-age classes are working well. Trained staff teach the curriculum as leaders intend. Explanations are clear, and staff use questioning skilfully to assess and deepen pupils' learning. Staff's subject knowledge is strong. Pupils typically achieve well across the curriculum.

Reading is a top priority at this school. Pupils benefit from a precisely planned phonics programme and effective teaching. This begins in Reception, where children get off to a strong start with learning to read. Staff swiftly identify the support pupils need to address any emerging gaps in learning. Pupils typically become fluent and confident readers. The school is working hard to establish its reading culture across the school. Pupils access a wide range of books. They are developing a love of reading.

The school deliberately provides opportunities for pupils to communicate what they have learned throughout the curriculum through their writing. However, teachers' expectations for pupils' writing are inconsistent. They are sometimes too low. On occasion, mistakes in writing and spelling go unchecked. Some pupils too often make repeated errors in their writing. As a result, they are not able to communicate their learning in a clear and accurate way.

The school identifies pupils' additional needs accurately. Systems ensure that pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) get the support that they need. Staff make well-considered adjustments to their teaching approaches. This enables pupils with SEND to access the curriculum and achieve well.

Expectations of behaviour are very high. Pupils are clear about the school's rules. They understand the consequences for poor behaviour. Therefore, lessons proceed without disruption. Pupils want to learn, and the calm orderly atmosphere allows them to do so successfully.

The school has a strong wider development offer. Staff have carefully considered the needs of their pupils. There is a rich and diverse offer to ensure pupils develop a strong understanding of different cultures and beliefs. This includes an understanding of life beyond the local community. For example, pupils recently enjoyed a Bollywood dance workshop and an African drumming event to broaden their cultural horizons. Additionally, pupils raise money for causes that mean something to them. As part of a recent rainforest topic, pupils raised money to sponsor an orangutan and their own part of the rainforest. As a result, pupils learn how to contribute meaningfully to society.

Staff are proud to work at this school. There is a strong sense of teamwork. They value leaders' consideration for their well-being. Staff also appreciate the training and opportunities they have to share expertise with colleagues and other trust schools.

Trustees and governors know the school very well. They fulfil their role effectively in providing effective oversight, support and challenge to the school.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The expectations of how effectively pupils communicate through their writing what they have learned are inconsistent across the curriculum. Pupils make errors in, and do not always fully understand, the technical elements of writing such as grammar and spelling. The school should ensure that pupils are taught writing skills consistently that will enable them to achieve well across all subjects where they are writing for different audiences and purposes.

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 school to be good in October 2018.

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	142554
Local authority	Suffolk
Inspection number	10338330
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	127
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Gary McDonald
CEO of the trust	Phil MacKay
Headteacher	Helen Ballam
Website	www.rattlesdenprimaryschool.co.uk
Dates of previous inspection	17 and 18 October 2018, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school is part of the Thedwastre Education Trust. This is a trust of four local primary schools.
- The school is a Church of England school in the Diocese of St Edmundsbury and Ipswich. The school's most recent section 48 inspection took place in October 2019. The next section 48 inspection is due to take place by the end of 2027.
- The school does not currently use any alternative provision.
- The school runs its own breakfast and after-school 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. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.

- Inspectors met with the headteacher, the assistant headteacher, subject leaders, teachers, members of the local governing body and the chief executive officer from the trust as part of the inspection.
- The inspection team carried out deep dives in early reading, mathematics and physical education. These included discussions with subject leaders, visits to lessons, meetings with staff and pupils, scrutiny of pupils' work and a review of any curriculum documentation.
- Inspectors also reviewed a range of pupils' books from across the curriculum as part of the inspection.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, inspectors 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 inspectors reviewed a range of documents, including behaviour logs, attendance records, pupils' records, records of trust meetings, local governing body meetings, school development plans and school self-evaluation documents.
- The inspectors gathered parents' views by reviewing responses submitted to Ofsted's online survey, Ofsted Parent View.
- The inspection team considered the responses to Ofsted's survey for school staff. Inspectors also met with staff throughout the inspection to gather their views.
- Inspectors spoke with pupils throughout the inspection to gather their views.

Inspection team

Jonny Wallace, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Jonathan Rockey

His Majesty's Inspector

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