

Inspection of a good school: Tollgate Community Junior School

Winston Crescent, Seaside, Eastbourne, East Sussex BN23 6NL

Inspection dates: 28 and 29 June 2023

Outcome

Tollgate Community Junior School continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are happy and safe in this nurturing school. The school's values of resilience, friendship, honesty, compassion, equality and respect underpin all aspects of school life. There are strong relationships between pupils and staff. Staff know pupils and their families well. One pupil, reflecting the thoughts of others, commented, 'I trust every adult in this school, one hundred percent.'

Leaders have set a culture of high expectations and aspirations. All staff uphold these well. Pupils rise to these challenges. Pupils are polite, kind and well-mannered. They work hard in class and achieve well. Pupils reflect the school's motto of 'Together Everyone Achieves More'. They enjoy discussing their learning and working collaboratively. Pupils are keen to ask questions and share their understanding and knowledge with their teachers and classmates.

Pupils understand the school rules and know why they are in place. Pupils behave well because they choose to. They take responsibility for their own behaviour. When needed, pupils respond positively to instructions from staff. Pupils know that bullying is never tolerated. Leaders' records support pupils' views about bullying. Throughout the school the atmosphere is calm and purposeful. It allows pupils to learn and have fun.

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

Leaders have designed a broad and ambitious curriculum that pupils find interesting and engaging. As a result, pupils are enthusiastic about their learning. Leaders have ensured that the curriculum builds in a coherent sequence over time. Teachers know what to teach and the order in which to teach it.

In most subjects, teachers' subject knowledge is strong. Where this is the case, teachers ensure that the curriculum is broken down into small steps that closely match the learning needs of all pupils. This enables pupils to develop knowledge, skills and a comprehensive vocabulary systematically. However, in a small number of subjects, teachers' subject knowledge is not as secure. In these subjects, teachers do not always plan activities that

build pupils' knowledge effectively or deepen it successfully. When this is the case, pupils do not learn and remember as much as they could.

Leaders have prioritised reading. Pupils who need help to read are identified quickly. Leaders ensure that targeted support is put into place promptly. The phonics leader regularly checks pupils' progress in reading, ensuring that extra support is provided if needed. When needed, staff help pupils to catch up quickly and become fluent readers. Leaders have established a strong culture of reading. This is abundantly clear when speaking to pupils. They love to read and do so widely and often. One pupil said, 'Reading takes me to different places and immerses me into different worlds.'

Leaders' and teachers' expectations for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are as aspirational as they are for other pupils. Leaders and the staff team identify pupils' needs accurately. Recently introduced 'pupil passports' provide teachers with detailed information about the provision needed for pupils with SEND. As a result, pupils with SEND learn the same curriculum as their peers and achieve well.

Leaders' provision for pupils' personal development is strong. Pupils have an age-appropriate understanding of healthy relationships. They are respectful of faiths and beliefs that are different to their own. Pupils are proud to undertake school-wide responsibilities, such as Tollgate Pupil Ambassadors, who help the younger pupils at playtime. Older pupils can apply formally for this role. If successful, they are trained in the skills needed for this important responsibility.

This is a school where all staff are happy and proud to work. Relationships with staff are open and honest. They feel listened to and supported by school leaders. Staff know that leaders are mindful of their workload. Everything they are asked to do is purposeful. Teachers are grateful that new initiatives are introduced slowly so that they do not have too many new things to manage at once.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders have established a strong culture of safeguarding. Thorough training enables staff to take prompt and decisive action if concerns arise. Leaders and staff work with parents and external agencies to make sure that children are safe. Leaders make all the required checks to ensure the suitability of adults who work with pupils.

Leaders provide pupils with a range of ways to raise any worries. For example, pupils know that if they post their concern in the 'worry box' leaders will take time to talk to them and help them. Staff teach pupils about how to keep themselves safe, including when online.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In a small number of subjects, teachers do not ensure that tasks focus sharply enough on exactly what pupils need to learn. This makes it harder for pupils to build and embed knowledge securely over time. In these subjects, pupils struggle to recall prior knowledge or make links between learning. Leaders should strengthen teachers' subject knowledge so that they can plan and adapt activities that enable all pupils to achieve well across the curriculum.

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 January 2014.

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' 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

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| Unique reference number | 114458 |
| Local authority | East Sussex |
| Inspection number | 10256513 |
| Type of school | Junior |
| School category | Community |
| Age range of pupils | 7 to 11 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number of pupils on the school roll | 389 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair of governing body | Howard Wardle |
| Headteacher | Stephen Dennis |
| Website | www.tollgate-jun.e.sussex.sch.uk |
| Date of previous inspection | 9 January 2018, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 |

Information about this school

- This school is a three-form entry junior school.
- 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. The inspector discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and has taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- The inspector met with the headteacher and extended leadership team, including leaders responsible for SEND, pastoral development and safeguarding.
- The inspector carried out deep dives in early reading, science and history. The inspector met with subject leaders, looked at curriculum plans, visited lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- The inspector observed pupils reading, visited phonics and reading lessons and spoke to pupils about their reading opportunities in school.

- A wide variety of school documents, including the school improvement plan, were reviewed by the inspector.
- The inspector held discussions with governors and met with a representative from the local authority.
- The inspector took account of parents' responses to the online survey, Ofsted Parent View, and parents' free-text responses. They also considered the responses to Ofsted's staff and pupil surveys.
- To inspect safeguarding, the inspector considered the school's relevant policies, scrutinised the single central record and checked the school's procedures for the safer recruitment of staff. The inspector spoke with safeguarding leaders, pupils and staff and sampled safeguarding records.

Inspection team

Luisa Gould, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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