

Inspection of a good school: Carden Nursery and Primary School

County Oak Avenue, Brighton, East Sussex BN1 8LU

Inspection dates:

29 and 30 September 2021

Outcome

Carden Nursery and Primary School continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

The school's atmosphere is buoyant as things begin to return to normal after the pandemic. Pupils are pleased to be back in school, enthused about learning and eager to catch up with their friends. They spend lunchtimes happily chatting to friends or playing games. Pupils usually behave well during break times although occasionally, one or two get a bit carried away and need a gentle reminder about the importance of being kind.

Strong relationships and a commitment to inclusivity throughout the school mean that pupils feel well cared for and secure. They know that adults in school will keep them safe. Bullying incidents are rare. Leaders deal with any concerns about bullying promptly and fairly. Teachers expect their pupils to work hard, and most do. Pupils watch and listen carefully during lessons so that everyone can get on with their work. They are polite and treat adults with respect. Pupils are understandably proud of their school. Pupils who attend the specialist resource centre play a full and active part in school life, confidently learning alongside their classmates in the mainstream classrooms, as well as attending lessons in the resource centre.

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

The headteacher and her senior leadership team have steered the school through recent challenging times successfully. Parents are very pleased with the school. They appreciate the care and attention staff give to their children and the lengths the school went to during the pandemic to support them and their children. Almost all those who completed Ofsted's survey, Parent View, would recommend the school.

Leaders are currently reinstating the usual wide range of subjects taught following the pandemic. They had made notable progress in improving curriculum plans prior to the pandemic. For example, the early years curriculum is now carefully constructed and highly effective in developing the youngest children's learning and personal development. However, planned developments in some of the foundation subjects, such as history, in key stage 1 and 2 have been hampered by the pandemic.

Leaders have made notable improvements to the teaching of phonics since the previous inspection. Pupils' early reading skills have improved as a result. However, leaders are ambitious for pupils. A new phonics programme is currently being rolled out across the school. Although early days, the positive impact the programme is having on the quality of phonics teaching, and on pupils' reading skills, is clear. Further staff training is scheduled for the coming weeks. This training will be particularly important for teaching in key stage 2, where historical weaknesses in phonics teaching have left some pupils struggling to read. Leaders are acutely aware of the importance of targeting this group of pupils and have made modifications to the key stage 2 English curriculum.

The early years curriculum introduces children in Nursery and Reception Years to key mathematics vocabulary and early concepts which supports them well in future learning. A well-established mathematics curriculum and timely staff training ensures that subsequent learning builds well on pupils' mathematical understanding.

Most pupils behave well in lessons. Occasionally, however, a few pupils lose focus and fidget during lessons. Sometimes this is allowed to continue for too long, so that other pupils are disturbed.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), including those who attend the specialist resource centre, participate fully in school life. The special educational needs coordinator and teacher in charge work closely with staff and parents to ensure that pupils with SEND are suitably supported and learn well.

The school assesses pupils' progress as a continuous part of teaching. For example, questions are used during lessons to check pupils' understanding, as well as more formal methods of assessment. Teachers meet with leaders regularly to discuss pupils' progress and to consider how best to support pupils in the future.

Pupils' wider development is a particular strength of the school's curriculum. The school's commitment to equality and diversity lies at the heart of all it does and underpins pupils' learning. At the time of the inspection, for example, the school's flagpole was proudly flying 'Pride' and 'Black Lives Matter' flags. Leaders are highly successful at engaging members from all corners of the school community in special events, such as its recent celebration of Eid. Adults make sure that the school's core values are meaningful to pupils. For example, during the inspection, one pupil explained that a classmate had earned a sticker for 'being respectful', while another described the school's values as 'our aspirations'. The school is currently in the process of restarting its usual wide range of clubs and activities. Leaders make sure that all pupils can attend clubs, regardless of background, ability or home circumstance.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders maintain a strong safeguarding culture in the school. Regular and well-focused training ensures that pupils' safety is always given a high priority. Staff have a shared understanding of their responsibility for making sure that pupils are safe. They report any

concerns promptly. Leaders keep a close check on pupils' well-being over time and seek advice from specialist services, such as children's services, where appropriate. Leaders' determination and tenacity in following up concerns has been key in securing vital support for vulnerable pupils and their families in the past.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Subject leaders had already begun the process of improving curriculum plans prior to the pandemic. However, progress had been hampered by the pandemic. It is for this reason that the transition statements have been applied. While curriculum plans in these subjects ensure adequate coverage of the national curriculum, they lack sufficient detail about exactly what should be taught in each year group. As a result, pupils do not learn as well as they should in these subjects. Leaders are clear about further improvements needed and keen to get planned developments back on track. They should ensure that further work to improve curriculum plans in the foundation subjects takes place.

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 October 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	131789
Local authority	Brighton and Hove
Inspection number	10200406
Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	370
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Amanda Mortensen
Headteacher	Helen Longton-Howorth
Website	www.carden.brighton-hove.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	24 November 2016, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school has a specialist resource centre for 22 pupils between the ages of five and 11 who have speech and language needs. 18 pupils attend the centre currently. All pupils have an education, health and care plan and are placed in the setting by the local authority. Pupils attend some lessons in the specialist resource centre and some in mainstream classes.
- The school is currently using one alternative provider.
- The school operates a breakfast club for pupils who attend the school.
- The headteacher was absent from the school between November 2020 and March 2021. The school was led by one of the assistant headteachers during this time.
- There have been a number of staffing changes since the previous inspection. Three assistant headteachers have been appointed. One assistant head has responsibility for early years and reading; the second is the special educational needs coordinator, and the third is responsible for the curriculum. All staff in key stage 1 have been appointed since the previous inspection.

Information about this inspection

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 (coronavirus) pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school, and have taken that into account in their evaluation.
- Inspectors met with the headteacher, assistant headteachers and other members of staff. They also spoke with seven governors, including the chair of governors, two local authority representatives and an independent school improvement adviser.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: reading, mathematics and history. For each deep dive, the inspector met with the subject leaders, looked at curriculum plans, visited a sample of lessons, spoke with teachers, held a discussion with some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors reviewed a range of safeguarding records and documents, including the single central record. They also met with the designated safeguarding lead, reviewed the school's safeguarding records and spoke with a group of pupils.

Inspection team

Julie Sackett, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Alice Roberts

Her Majesty's Inspector

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