Inspection of a school judged good for overall effectiveness before September 2024: Raynsford Church of England Academy

Park Lane, Henlow, Bedfordshire SG16 6AT

Inspection dates: 12 and 13 November 2024

Outcome

Raynsford Church of England Academy has taken effective action to maintain the standards identified at the previous inspection.

The headteacher of this school is Ed Wheatley. Raynsford Church of England Academy is a single-academy trust, which means that other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Zoe Fleming.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils at Raynsford love their school. They are proud of their school's strongly held core values, such as forgiveness and inclusivity. They strive to be respectful, considerate and good friends towards each other. Pupils feel safe and well looked after at school. They implicitly trust in staff to help them with any worries they might have.

Pupils behave consistently well and are extremely polite. They understand the school's approach to behaviour and willingly follow it. Pupils learn to recognise the negative feelings which might lead to mistakes in their behaviour. Their resulting self-awareness helps them to regulate their conduct. This approach especially benefits pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), some of whom join the school mid-year after an unsettled start to their education. These pupils feel that they belong to the school community.

The school's high expectations for pupils are consistently met. Most pupils attain nationally expected standards by the time they leave the school in Year 6. Pupils commit to working hard in lessons and many join the school's varied clubs outside lessons. Pupils' positive attitudes towards school start in the early years, where children, including two-year-olds, learn to engage with interest in their learning activities.

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

The school has made substantial improvements to the quality of education pupils receive. Its revised curriculum is well-thought-out and ambitious, especially in reading, writing and mathematics. The small steps that pupils need to learn are set out clearly, ensuring that pupils' knowledge builds successfully.

The school has provided effective training to support staff's expertise in delivering the curriculum in English and mathematics. Staff draw upon their strong subject knowledge to ask effective questions, which deepen pupils' understanding. Staff present information clearly. They typically provide prompt support so that pupils do not fall behind. However, pupils in the early stages of writing occasionally do not get the practise they need to develop fluent, legible handwriting. This hinders them from expressing their ideas and showing what they have learned in writing as they progress through the curriculum.

The school maintains a sharp focus on ensuring that pupils learn to read. The recently introduced phonics programme is ensuring that pupils quickly learn the sounds they need to decode words. Most pupils quickly develop reading fluency so they can read for meaning independently. Teachers check progress in reading regularly. If pupils fall behind, they promptly receive the right help. Pupils love the high-quality books they study in lessons.

The school's review of the delivery of the wider curriculum is ongoing and there has not been as much staff training as in English and mathematics. Overall, pupils learn well across different subjects and remember most of what they are taught. However, the school has not ensured that staff are as expert in the delivery of the wider curriculum as in the core subjects. Occasionally, learning activities are over-complicated and not well-matched enough to what pupils know. This means that sometimes pupils do not learn in as much depth as they could.

Early years children, including two-year-olds, get off to a strong start. They make rapid progress through the school's early curriculum, which is particularly detailed, and effectively prepares children for later learning. Children are settled, happy, and cared for well by staff.

Teachers work closely with the families of pupils with SEND to put effective support in place. Staff are highly trained and meet pupils' varying needs well. Most pupils with SEND access the same curriculum as others through carefully adjusted support. A few receive a carefully planned bespoke curriculum, which enables pupils to make good progress from their starting points. Pupils with SEND achieve well.

Pupils at Raynsford see their learning as important. They typically focus well in class without disturbing each other. Any inappropriate behaviour at school is usually minor and quickly resolved by staff.

The school's provision for pupils' broader development is a strength. Pupils are keen to share their reflections on how to value and respect differences between human beings.

Pupils learn about values such as democracy through, for example, producing manifestos for key roles in the school. Many capably step into elected positions of responsibility, such as reading ambassadors. Pupils are keen to contribute to their local community through, for example, charity funding raising. They are well prepared for life beyond the school.

The new leadership team has worked incredibly hard to ensure that pupils' best interests are met across all aspects of the school's performance. Together with the trust, leaders continue to bring about rapid improvement. Staff are overwhelmingly supportive of the changes and appreciate the school's sensitive management of their workload.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Occasionally, pupils in the early stages of writing do not receive enough practise to develop fluent, legible handwriting. This limits their ability to express their ideas in writing as they progress through the curriculum. The school should prioritise the development of fluent, legible handwriting, enabling all pupils to develop strong writing skills and express their ideas with greater confidence and clarity.
- In the wider curriculum, occasionally, learning activities are not matched well enough to what pupils already know. As a result, they sometimes do not learn in as much depth as they could. The school should continue its ongoing review of the wider curriculum, ensuring that staff receive the necessary training to develop sufficient knowledge across all subjects.

Background

Until September 2024, on a graded (section 5) inspection we gave schools an overall effectiveness grade, in addition to the key and provision judgements. Overall effectiveness grades given before September 2024 will continue to be visible on school inspection reports and on Ofsted's website. From September 2024 graded inspections will not include an overall effectiveness grade. This school was, before September 2024, judged to be good for its overall effectiveness.

We have now inspected the school to determine whether it has taken effective action to maintain the standards identified at that previous inspection. 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's work has improved significantly or that it may not be as strong as it was at the last inspection, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection. A graded inspection 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 for overall effectiveness in January 2015.

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	139473
Local authority	Central Bedfordshire
Inspection number	10345363
Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	2 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	235
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Zoe Fleming
Headteacher	Ed Wheatley
Website	www.raynsfordacademy.org.uk
Dates of previous inspection	31 October 2018, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The headteacher is new in post since the previous inspection and took up post in July 2022.
- The school has provision for two-year-olds.
- The school runs its own before- and after-school clubs.
- The school uses one unregistered alternative provider.
- The most recent inspection of the school's religious character under section 48 of the Education Act 2005 was carried out in May 2017. The next section 48 inspection is due within eight years.

Information about this inspection

- Inspections are a point-in-time evaluation 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 school leaders and has taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- The inspector held discussions with five governors, including the chair.
- The inspector held discussions with the headteacher and other senior leaders. The inspector spoke with the school's external school improvement adviser.
- The inspector visited a sample of lessons, spoke to pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- The inspector observed the behaviour of pupils during lesson visits and breaktimes and talked with them to understand their views of the school.
- 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 considered responses to the online survey, Ofsted Parent View, including free-text comments. The inspector also considered responses to Ofsted's staff and pupil surveys.

Inspection team

Judith Sumner, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector

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