

Inspection of a school judged outstanding for overall effectiveness before September 2024: Polegate Primary School

Oakleaf Drive, East Sussex, Polegate, East Sussex BN26 6PT

Inspection dates:

13 and 14 May 2025

Outcome

Polegate Primary School has taken effective action to maintain the standards identified at the previous inspection.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils rate their vibrant and friendly school highly. They feel very lucky to attend Polegate Primary. The school's vision of 'learning without limits' is tightly woven through daily life. Pupils work hard during lessons and pay close attention to their teachers, thanks to the school's high expectations. Pupils achieve well across the curriculum. They thoroughly enjoy their interesting, fun and relevant learning.

Pupils behave impeccably and appreciate the excellent relationships that they have with each other and with staff. Pupils are safe and know that staff care about them. If ever they feel worried, they are confident that adults would help them. Staff make sure that the school is a happy and secure place.

Pupils' well-being is a top priority. The school offers great pastoral support. Skilled staff help pupils to understand and to manage their feelings independently. Pupils are encouraged to be physically active at playtimes through a wide range of games and activities. Regular sessions in the on-site swimming pool mean that pupils quickly gain water confidence. Through the curriculum, pupils are taught how to manage risk, including when online. This means that pupils have a thorough understanding of internet safety. The school prepares them very well for the next stage in life.

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

The school offers an ambitious and well-considered curriculum. Logical links made between different subjects mean that pupils benefit from carefully connected learning that builds over time. In subjects such as physical education, the precisely sequenced

curriculum and expert teaching mean that pupils develop strong skills and knowledge. In a couple of subjects, however, pupils do not always remember their learning well enough. Here, some key ideas have not been fully understood, meaning that facts become muddled over time.

The school has refined its approach to teaching mathematics because in the past, pupils did not achieve as well as they could have. Pupils now have ample opportunity to build their mathematic knowledge. In early years, children confidently count their minibeasts, with helpful support from staff. Older pupils relish thinking deeply about mathematical problems. Teachers are skilled in explaining ideas clearly and regularly check pupils' understanding.

Pupils achieve well in English, particularly in writing. Pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), are expertly supported to write confidently and accurately across all subjects. Pupils quickly develop the skills that they need to become fluent readers. Right from the start of Nursery, children regularly enjoy stories, rhymes and songs. The excellent start that they make in early years gives them strong foundations for later learning.

Pupils who are disadvantaged, including those with SEND, are at the centre of the school's work. Staff quickly spot pupils' barriers to learning and ensure that pupils get the support that they need. This helps disadvantaged pupils to participate fully in the life of the school, to learn and achieve well.

Pupils' behaviour is exemplary. The deeply ingrained culture of mutual respect and understanding is seen through all areas of the school. Pupils and adults alike are cheerful, polite and friendly. In early years, children's personal and social development is extremely well supported. Staff are determined that every child can succeed. Children develop great learning habits, showing sustained concentration and care for each other. In key stage 1 and 2, well-understood routines mean that not a moment of learning time is lost. Pupils focus exceptionally well during lessons, giving their views clearly and confidently if they are asked to 'stand and be proud'. Pupils' attendance is high. Leaders work effectively with families who struggle to ensure that their child attends regularly. However, the school does not analyse absence information in enough detail. This means that absence patterns and trends over time are not always spotted.

Pupils benefit from the school's carefully considered and substantial wider development offer. Pupils are well prepared for life in modern Britain. They take part in debates on current issues, maturely considering views that are different to their own. Pupils enjoy attending a wide range of extra-curricular clubs, including music, sports and arts. These develop pupils' talents and interests well. Older pupils talk enthusiastically about enrichment activities such as residential trips. These experiences help to develop pupils' resilience and team skills. Through various leadership roles, pupils learn how to become considerate citizens, improving school life and supporting their peers.

Staff are immensely proud to work here. They fully endorse leaders' ambition to continually improve the educational experience that pupils receive. Staff appreciate the

efforts of leaders to look after their well-being and ensure that their workload is manageable. Governors understand the school very well and support leaders effectively.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In a couple of subjects, pupils do not fully understand some important concepts. This means that, over time, their recall is weak or jumbled. This does not provide firm foundations for new learning. The school should ensure that, in these subjects, key ideas are taught precisely and clearly and that pupils fully understand these important facts.
- The school does not analyse absence information in enough detail. This means that trends and patterns over time, particularly around persistent absence, may be missed. The school should ensure that absence information is reviewed effectively.

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 outstanding 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 first ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be outstanding for overall effectiveness in January 2020.

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	114435
Local authority	East Sussex
Inspection number	10379748
Type of school	Primary
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	2 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	695
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Elizabeth Latter
Headteacher	Deborah Jones
Website	www.polegateschool.co.uk
Dates of previous inspection	15 and 16 January 2020, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The headteacher has been in post since 2022.
- The school has a nursery class for two- and three-year-old children.
- The school does not currently use alternative provision.

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. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken this into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors spoke to leaders, including the headteacher and the special educational needs coordinator. They also spoke to three members of the governing body. Discussions were held with other groups of staff. Account was taken of the responses to Ofsted's staff survey.

- Inspectors met groups of pupils, observed pupils at breaktime and lunchtime and visited the breakfast club offered before school.
- The lead inspector spoke to a representative from East Sussex local authority.
- Inspectors visited samples of lessons, spoke to pupils about their learning and about their wider experience in the school and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the 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.
- Inspectors met parents at the start of the school day and took account of the responses received on Ofsted Parent View.

Inspection team

Maria Roberts, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Mark Rivers

Ofsted Inspector

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