

Inspection of a school judged good for overall effectiveness before September 2024: Friars Primary School and Nursery

Constable Way, Shoeburyness, Southend-on-Sea, Essex SS3 9XX

Inspection dates:

10 and 11 December 2024

Outcome

Friars Primary School and Nursery has taken effective action to maintain the standards identified at the previous inspection.

The principal of this school is Christopher (Chris) McClay. This school is part of Portico Academy Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer (CEO), Cheryl Woolf, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Karen Packer.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils speak highly of their experiences at school. This is because staff go to great lengths to give pupils cherished childhood memories. Staff have a knack for seeing the world through a child's eyes. Hence, the school environment is alive with vibrant displays to stimulate interest. The outdoor space has trails, a hobbit hut and man-made bridges to capture pupils' imaginations. Pupils make full use of the school grounds and the outdoor equipment during social times.

Pupils rise to staff's ambitious expectations. They are eager to learn and show off their knowledge in their lessons, for instance, with their twelve times tables. Pupils are happy to have a go at doing more complex work. They fully appreciate the wider opportunities they have in the curriculum. The school runs many visits, workshops and clubs. The recent pop-up swimming pool was a big hit.

Pupils behave well. Children in Nursery learn the school's routines, such as taking turns to speak, in readiness for later learning. Pupils support each other very well. They eagerly contribute to the school community, such as reading to younger pupils, looking after the environment, and growing vegetables to eat.

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

The school's language-rich environment is complemented by its curriculum. There is an emphasis upon widening pupils' vocabulary and their understanding of the wider world. At the heart of the school's work there is a well-chosen reading curriculum which exposes pupils to high-quality texts. Pupils are avid readers and debate the merits of their favourite authors.

Teachers are precise in their delivery of the curriculum, including the school's chosen phonics programme. They pay close attention to pupils' pronunciation of the sounds they read so they can correct when need be. Pupils become confident and fluent readers. When teaching mathematics, staff readily spot when pupils get their calculations wrong. Their clear explanations help pupils see how to amend their work. Staff consistently use the school's agreed approaches to help pupils remember what they have learned. They make helpful connections for pupils across the curriculum. This reinforces pupils' knowledge and understanding.

The focus on language and communication in the curriculum is having impact. Children in the early years show they understand etiquette. They know how to use the norms of language, such as how to greet adults and ask questions in a conversation. Older pupils confidently use the technical language of the subject, such as discussing improper fractions in mathematics. They also use a wide vocabulary in their writing. They write accurately and at length across the curriculum. However, the school's work to help younger pupils secure early handwriting skills is not as effective. This is because pupils in key stage 1 do not have sufficient practice to ensure they form their letters correctly and write accurately.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) continue to be served well by the curriculum. Staff know pupils well and this helps inform the adjustments they make. They recognise early if pupils require extra support. Staff work closely with families to remove barriers to pupils' attendance. They readily involve other professionals and external agencies to get the support they need. While the school is successful in its message about the importance of attending school, some pupils are not attending as often as they should.

Pupils' behaviour and respect for each other are strengths in the school. They demonstrate daily the school's value of including everyone. Children in Nursery, for example, adjust their positions in circle-time so everyone can see. Older pupils make sure everyone has someone to play with. Pupils show a good understanding of difference. Within the school's personal development programmes, pupils have opportunities to learn about faith, fundamental British values and other cultures.

The school enriches pupils' lives through the wider opportunities they receive. These are deliberately chosen to broaden horizons. Many pupils learn musical instruments. There are a range of leadership opportunities, including roles such as music ambassadors, prefects and digital leaders. This helps pupils learn responsibility and builds their confidence. The school effectively promotes pupils' physical and mental health.

Trustees provide effective support and challenge to the school. There is a sharp focus on making sure the curriculum supports pupils to learn well. They regularly check on staff morale and their workload. Staff feel highly valued as part of the 'Friars family'. They benefit from a range of networking opportunities with other colleagues in the trust.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- There are not sufficient opportunities in the curriculum for younger writers to practise their early writing skills. This means that pupils in key stage 1 find it difficult to perfect their handwriting and develop the stamina they need for writing in key stage 2. The school should review this element of the curriculum, ensuring pupils have more practice with letter formation and transcription, so they develop secure writing skills before moving onto lengthier tasks.
- Some pupils do not attend school as often as they should. This means they miss out on learning aspects of the curriculum as well as the socialisation and experiences that school brings. The school should continue to implement its plans to remove the barriers to attendance that some pupils have.

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 predecessor school, Friars Primary School and Nursery, to be good for overall effectiveness in December 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](#)' 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	143334
Local authority	Southend-on-Sea
Inspection number	10345454
Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	420
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Karen Packer
CEO of the trust	Cheryl Woolf
Principal	Christopher (Chris) McClay
Website	www.friarsprimary.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	16 July 2019, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- Since the previous inspection, the principal and vice principal have joined the school.
- The school uses one registered alternative provision.
- The Nursery provides two sessions a day, morning and afternoon.
- The school runs before- and after-school clubs.

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 the school and has taken that into account in her evaluation of the school.

- The inspector met with the chair of the trust, a trustee, the CEO and the director of learning for the trust. She also discussed the school's provision with the principal, senior leaders and staff.
- The inspector spoke with representatives from the alternative provision.
- The inspector visited a sample of lessons, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- The inspector scrutinised a range of documentation provided by the school. This included reports from trustees, the school improvement plan and the school's self-evaluation.
- The inspector spoke to groups of pupils about their personal development and experiences of behaviour. She observed pupils in lessons and during their social time.
- 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 the responses to the Ofsted Parent View questionnaire and the free-text comments that were submitted. She also took account of the responses to the confidential Ofsted staff and pupil surveys. She gathered the views of staff and pupils throughout the inspection.

Inspection team

Liz Smith, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

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