

Inspection of a school judged good for overall effectiveness before September 2024: East Stour Primary School

Earlsworth Road, South Willesborough, Ashford, Kent TN24 0DW

Inspection dates:

7 and 8 January 2025

Outcome

Evidence gathered during this ungraded (section 8) inspection suggests that the school's work may have improved significantly across all areas since the previous inspection. The school's next inspection will be a graded inspection.

The headteacher of this school is Sophie Sadler. This school is part of EKC Schools Trust Limited, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer (CEO), Tammy Mitchell, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Graham Razey. There is also an executive headteacher, Emma Law, who is responsible for this school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Inclusivity and acceptance drive every aspect of this school. The school welcomes all pupils, and they flourish in the culture of care and kindness. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) feel valued and included. Pupils are happy at school. New pupils often join the school. When they join, the school gives them detailed guidance on how to treat each other as well as on their learning. The school's care and attention make all pupils feel safe, even when the school is a new place to them.

The school has high expectations of pupil's behaviour and learning. It structures key experiences to give pupils a sense of ambition. For example, the young carers group at the school works with a young carers group at a local college. This gives them a pathway and aspiration for the future. Pupils show this in their focus and achievement in lessons. Pupils are deeply proud of their work. Their books demonstrate the depth and breadth of their learning. Pupils from a variety of different starting points achieve exceptionally well. Pupils from Nursery onwards are eager, yet respectful, and have the language skills to express themselves clearly. Their behaviour across the school is impeccable.

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

Pupils remember and apply their learning exceptionally well. From the Nursery onwards,

pupils build their learning through well-chosen activities and experiences. Staff are expert at identifying and supporting pupils with SEND. These pupils flourish in the school's approach to learning. The school has a substantial number of pupils who join the school throughout the year. Many of these pupils have some form of disadvantage. The school treats this as an opportunity and not an excuse. As a result, pupils, even those from extremely low starting points, achieve well. Pupils in the Nursery and the Reception classes build highly effective attention and language skills. Consequently, they are fully prepared for the next stages of education. Pupils' books show that learning is remembered and used extremely well. Most pupils match the nationally published averages for attainment by the end of Year 6. Those who did not achieve as well often joined the school late in their journey and had specific challenges to overcome.

Pupils see reading as the key to all their learning. Pupils were enthusiastic about their reading. Many pupils highlighted that the school's library was the only place where they had access to the books they loved and where they felt safest. From the Reception class onwards, there is highly effective teaching of reading. The school's approach to catching pupils up and keeping them working alongside their peers is a strength of the school. As with the rest of the curriculum, staff complete meticulous checks on what pupils know and can do. Staff use this information to inform highly effective training, teaching and support. Pupils, including those with any disadvantage, achieve well. They match the published national averages in the phonics screening check and at the end of Year 6.

Pupils bubble with enthusiasm for learning. They treat each other and adults with respect and care. Pupils are confident that adults will listen to and resolve their concerns. Pupils embody their great attitudes to learning in their excellent classroom behaviour. They follow routines and expectations with a sense of urgency. The school has a razor-sharp focus on attendance. They keep meticulous records to improve how often pupils attend. This has a consistently positive impact on the attendance of the most vulnerable pupils. Although some pupils are absent more often than the school would like, it is doing everything it can to address this.

Pupils' maturity and character shine through their actions and attitudes. The school purposefully provides opportunities and learning to develop pupils' independence. Pupils learn key life skills with experiences such as using local public transport. They acquire a deep appreciation and knowledge of different faiths and perspectives. They have a detailed understanding of fundamental British values and how they relate to everyone. The school ensures that pupils who are disadvantaged fully benefit from these rich experiences.

Leaders at every level are passionate about the school and its role in the community. The staff are unified in their vision of the importance of the education and opportunities they provide for pupils. The school provides a comprehensive professional development programme that covers every facet of school life. As a result, all staff have excellent professional skills and knowledge. All staff, including those early in their career, feel their welfare is a school priority. Governors and trustees are highly effective at meeting their statutory duties.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

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, East Stour Primary School, to be good for overall effectiveness in July 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	148991
Local authority	Kent
Inspection number	10341915
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	421
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Graham Razey
CEO of the trust	Tammy Mitchell
Headteacher	Emma Law (Executive Headteacher)
Headteacher	Sophie Sadler
Website	www.east-stour.kent.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- The school has been part of EKC Schools Trust Limited since April 2022.
- This school has a breakfast club and after-school club provision.
- The school does not currently use any 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. The inspector discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and has taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- During the inspection, the inspector spoke to leaders of the school, members of the governing body and representatives of the trust. The inspector also considered the

staff and pupil surveys and Ofsted Parent View responses.

- The inspector visited a sample of lessons, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- 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.

Inspection team

Toby Martlew, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

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