

Inspection of a school judged good for overall effectiveness before September 2024: Plains Farm Academy

Tudor Grove, Sunderland, Tyne and Wear SR3 1SU

Inspection dates:

3 and 4 December 2024

Outcome

Plains Farm Academy has taken effective action to maintain the standards identified at the previous inspection.

The headteacher of this school is Lesley Cassidy. The school is part of Inspire Multi Academy Trust, which means other people in the trust have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer (CEO), Joanne West, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Steve Ruffell.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils embody the values of this nurturing, warm and supportive school. Pupils flourish because they are cared for deeply. At the heart of every decision the school makes are pupils' needs. An atmosphere where respect is commonplace has been created by the school. There is a culture of high expectations. Pupils feel happy and safe in school. They are keen to learn and are very appreciative of the varied experiences the school provides for them.

Pupils are respectful and understanding of each other's needs. They show consideration and care. Pupils are routinely kind to each other. The behaviour they show at all points of the day is exemplary. The school has high expectations of pupils. Everyone in school models these expectations.

Pupils benefit from a well-thought-out curriculum that helps them to achieve well. This includes those pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Learning is brought to life through many additional experiences. These include visits to a local mosque and taking part in woodland in their forest school.

Pupils participate in a wide range of clubs and extra-curricular activities. These include making bracelets club, football, youth club and craft opportunities. Activities on offer are

tailored to pupils' interests and talents. Several of them are run by pupils to develop their own leadership skills.

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

The school has developed a carefully designed and sequenced curriculum. From the early years through to Year 6, the knowledge that pupils should learn is clear. The school has put in place a variety of effective approaches to support pupils to remember their learning. For example, in Year 4 science pupils use pictures, 'remember remember' questions and vocabulary to recall key facts around melting and freezing chocolate. This supports their understanding of solids, liquids and gases. Currently, these approaches to help pupils to remember are being used in geography, history, science and English. The school is aware of the need to now implement these approaches across the full curriculum to further support pupils' learning.

Children get off to a secure start in Reception. The environment is exciting and stimulating and develops children's independence and curiosity very well. The school makes sure that children become confident mathematicians. Many opportunities are in place for children to explore number. For example, pupils count the number of objects in a tub and exploring what zero looks like.

Communication and the development of early language is a clear priority. Children can retell familiar stories and are eager to share their favourites with visitors. There is a sharp focus on early reading. All staff are highly skilled in delivering phonic sessions. Staff quickly identify those pupils at risk of falling behind. Targeted support is put in place immediately and pupils catch up quickly. As pupils progress through school, they are encouraged to read more ambitious books. Pupils enjoy reading and choosing books from the beautiful school library.

The school provides exceptional support for pupils with SEND. Staff identify pupils' needs well. The school works relentlessly to remove any barriers that pupils might face in their learning. They do this by making sure all staff have the relevant expertise to help pupils with SEND. These pupils receive exactly the right amount of support to become confident learners.

Relationships between pupils, children and adults are extremely positive. Children learn school routines quickly. They concentrate well, listen carefully and take turns when they talk together as a class. Pupils behave well in lessons and at social times. Bullying is rare and pupils are confident that any adult would deal with it effectively. Pupils are supported in understanding and managing their emotions. Developing positive mental health and well-being for pupils and staff are a high priority in school.

The school is relentless in making sure pupils attend regularly in school. Pupils are clear as to the benefits of being in school and are eager to get into school and learn.

The school is committed to pupils' wider development. Pupils are prepared for life in modern Britain. Pupils are passionate about the fact that everyone should be treated

equally and fairly. Pupils have a wide range of opportunities to develop their wider interests and subject knowledge. The school has put in place the 'Inspired' visits and visitor programme that begins in Reception. Pupils visit local and national art galleries, explore the region's history and enjoy residential visits, including visits to London.

The school is very well led and managed. Leaders and staff value being part of the trust. Trustees and governors provide support on many levels. Staff feel that they are valued and trusted members of the Plains Farm community. As one teacher, reflecting the views of others said, 'We're a small school but with a big heart.'

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to improve

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The school's approaches to help pupils retain and use key knowledge are not consistently used across the wider curriculum. As a result, pupils do not secure deep knowledge in all subjects. The school should now ensure that the successful strategies to help pupils to remember key knowledge are used in 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 March 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	139389
Local authority	Sunderland
Inspection number	10346485
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	170
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Steve Ruffell
CEO of the trust	Joanne West
Headteacher	Lesley Cassidy
Website	www.plainsfarmacademy.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	8 May 2019, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school provides a breakfast club and after-school care.
- The school makes use of one registered alternative provision.
- The school converted to become an academy when it joined Inspire Multi-Academy Trust in April 2013.

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.
- 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.

- During the inspection, the inspector met with the headteacher and deputy headteacher, who is also the special educational needs coordinator. She met the chair of the governing body and several governors. She also met with the CEO, the chair of the Inspire Multi Academy Trust and an external school development partner.
- Throughout the inspection, the inspector met with groups of staff. She also considered the opinions expressed through the staff survey.
- The inspector observed some pupils read to a familiar adult.
- During the inspection, the inspector focused activity on the following groups of subjects; early reading and mathematics; and geography, history, science and English. For each group of subjects, the inspector visited a sample of lessons, spoke with pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- The inspector took account of responses to parental free-text responses.

Inspection team

Anne Vernon, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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