

Inspection of Cottage Grove Primary School and Nursery

Chivers Close, Southsea, Hampshire PO5 1HG

Inspection dates: 25 and 26 June 2024

Overall effectiveness	Requires improvement
The quality of education	Requires improvement
Behaviour and attitudes	Outstanding
Personal development	Outstanding
Leadership and management	Good
Early years provision	Good
Previous inspection grade	Not previously inspected under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

The headteacher of this school is Lee Branscombe. This school is part of the University of Portsmouth Academy Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the interim chief executive officer, Gwennan Harrison-Jones, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Dai Thomas and Mark Cooper.

What is it like to attend this school?

The school is at the heart of the community. Pupils, staff, parents and carers comment on this. Diversity is celebrated and nurtured throughout the school. Everyone is welcome here and valued for what they offer to the school's diverse community. Many pupils join the school throughout the academic year, and several speak English as an additional language. Across the school, pupils speak over 50 different languages.

There is a highly inclusive ethos and the school is determined to raise aspirations for pupils. This ambition is being achieved through the exceptionally strong pastoral support and bespoke personal development programme that the school offers. There is still some work to be done, however, to embed curriculum changes so that all pupils achieve well.

Pupils benefit from the warm, purposeful environment that staff have created. The positive relationships seen throughout the school are built on a deep understanding of each pupil's needs.

Pupils are taught how to stay safe and why this matters. The school makes sure that pupils who are learning English still understand the key safety messages. Pupils are clear on the importance of having a trusted adult to talk to should they have any worries.

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

Relatively recent changes within the trust have resulted in effective support for the school. This oversight has helped the school to make positive changes to the curriculum. The school knows that not all pupils are prepared for the next stage of their education and they are tackling this. However, it is too soon to see the full impact of these changes on pupils' outcomes.

The school is highly ambitious for pupils and has designed a curriculum that matches this ambition. Subjects are well sequenced and identify what pupils need to remember. Due to the number of pupils who join at different points during the year, the school has focused on introducing retrieval tasks in every lesson. These are helping pupils to recall their prior learning. However, in some lessons, teachers do not choose the best way of introducing new ideas. As a result, pupils sometimes have misconceptions and staff do not always notice these.

There are robust systems in place which help staff to identify pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Staff adapt tasks so that pupils with SEND can learn successfully alongside their peers. Due to the clear understanding of these pupils' individual needs and well-matched activities, pupils with SEND achieve well.

Reading is given a high priority from Nursery onwards and the school is focused on ensuring that pupils learn to read quickly. However, there is variability in how well phonics is taught. Some staff expertly support pupils who are at the early stages of reading, but others do not provide the same high-quality assistance. The books that these pupils read are well matched to the sounds that they have learned. However, pupils do not always understand what the words they are reading mean. Extra support sessions and tutoring help pupils to catch up with their peers.

The school's commitment to developing a sense of belonging and involvement is well embedded. Pupils relish the responsibilities they have to be ambassadors for the school. They talk positively about their roles as mental health ambassadors and the support they provide to their peers. The school has made positive links within the local community, for example, through the work with the local university. This is helping to broaden pupils' horizons. The high-quality programme for personal, social, and health education supports pupils to discuss mature themes and concepts.

The school has tackled pupils' attendance robustly this year. This sharp focus has been highly effective at increasing pupils' attendance and has reduced the numbers of pupils who are persistently absent. The school recognises that some pupils and their families need more help with this. They provide this in different ways depending on the specific needs.

Staff are well trained in how to implement the school's approach to maintaining positive behaviour. They have high expectations and are very clear on these. The routines for school life begin in Nursery. Here, children are well supported to follow instructions, take turns and demonstrate the school values. This continues throughout the school. Sometimes, pupils need a different approach to help them meet the expectations. The superb pastoral offer supports these pupils so they can be successful. All of this well-considered and implemented support helps pupils to develop positive attitudes and resilience.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Staff do not always use the most effective pedagogical approaches to support pupils' learning. This means that pupils do not always achieve as well as they could. Leaders need to ensure that staff understand and use appropriate pedagogical approaches in all lessons.
- Staff do not consistently identify misconceptions during lessons. This means that pupils' gaps are not always addressed, and pupils do not learn as deeply as they could. The school should support staff in how to robustly check pupils' understanding during lessons.

- There is variability in the teaching of early reading. The weakest readers do not learn to read as quickly and fluently as they could. The school needs to ensure that all staff are well trained to teach early reading and that pupils understand what they are reading.

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	148709
Local authority	Portsmouth
Inspection number	10339695
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	447
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Dai Thomas and Mark Cooper (Co-chairs)
CEO of the trust	Gwennan Harrison-Jones (Interim CEO)
Headteacher	Lee Branscombe
Website	www.cottagegrove.co.uk
Date(s) of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- This is a larger than average primary school. Over half the pupils are in receipt of free school meals and over half the pupils speak English as an additional language. A significant number of pupils join the school during the academic year.
- Cottage Grove Primary School and Nursery converted to become an academy in January 2022. It joined the University of Portsmouth Academy Trust at this time. When the predecessor school, Cottage Grove Primary School, was last inspected by Ofsted, it was judged to be good overall.
- The school currently uses one registered alternative provision.
- The school runs a breakfast and after-school club for pupils.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

- Inspections are a point-in-time judgement 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 inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in the evaluation of the school.
- The inspection team met with the headteacher and deputy headteachers. They also met with other school leaders, staff and pupils.
- The lead inspector met with two governors, including the chair of governors. She met two trustees, including one of the co-chairs and spoke to the interim CEO of the trust.
- The inspection team carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics, physical education, art and science. For each deep dive, the inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- To inspect safeguarding, the inspection team checked the single central record of recruitment checks and talked to leaders responsible for safeguarding. The inspectors also talked to a range of staff and pupils informally.
- The inspectors considered the responses to the confidential staff survey and spoke to a range of staff and pupils about their views of the school.
- The inspectors took account of the 21 responses to the Ofsted Parent View questionnaire and the additional 15 free-text responses. An inspector talked with some parents on the first morning of the inspection.
- The inspection team met with a range of pupils to discuss their views about the school and talked to pupils informally during social times and in lessons.
- The inspectors reviewed a range of documentation, including the school development plan and school self-evaluation.

Inspection team

Sara Staggs, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Rachel Goplen	Ofsted Inspector
Linda Appleby	Ofsted Inspector

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