

Ridgmont Lower School

URN: 109476 | Inspected: 25 November 2025

Safeguarding

standards met

The safeguarding standards are met. This means that leaders and/or those responsible for governance and oversight fulfil their specific responsibilities and have established an open culture in which safeguarding is everyone's responsibility and concerns are actively identified, acted upon and managed. As a result, pupils are made safer and feel safe.

Achievement

Expected standard

Small cohorts mean there is limited relevant published data for this school. However, pupils who attend for 2 years typically achieve well in the phonics screening check at the end of Year 1. The school addresses the knowledge gaps of pupils who join the school mid-year. For example, those who cannot read confidently are taught this for as long as needed through the school's well-structured phonics programme. Additionally, in wider subjects, such as history, teachers identify pupils' prior knowledge so that new knowledge deepens from their individual starting points. Leaders make sure that pupils make steady and sustained progress through the curriculum, regardless of their needs or vulnerabilities. Pupils speak about their achievements and apply what they know across different subjects. Leaders work closely with local schools to ensure that pupils learn content that prepares them well for their next stage of education and that standards are high.

Curriculum and teaching

Expected standard

The school curriculum is broad and well sequenced. Leaders set long-term learning goals and plan clear steps for pupils to achieve these. Generally, teachers use this framework to design tasks that help pupils to build knowledge and commit new learning to memory. Staff have the expertise to teach pupils the knowledge that they need. Pupils who need extra help use learning supports, such as word banks, to aid their thinking. Subject-specific vocabulary is taught well. As a result, pupils use language confidently to deepen their understanding. Where gaps exist in key skills, such as in reading and mathematics, staff make sure that pupils learn what they need to be ready for their next educational stage. Leaders continue to prioritise work to make sure that all curriculum subjects are taught equally well. The youngest children know how to use their well-designed learning environment. Tasks are engaging and build important key skills, such as developing children's communication and language. Staff deliver an appropriate curriculum and respond quickly to nurture children's interests, for example, through exploring topics such as spiders. Children develop independence and achieve success across all areas of learning. For some pupils, the school has not supported them to be as secure in their writing as they could be. Sometimes, in wider curriculum subjects, pupils' use of key aspects of grammar, such as the correct use of capital letters, is inconsistent. Leaders have identified this. There are plans to improve it, though these are at an early stage.

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Inclusion

Expected standard

Staff accurately identify the needs of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) and any other vulnerability they may have. This means that any additional support provided matches pupils' requirements. Working closely with parents and carers, staff gain a clear understanding of each pupil's strengths and learning needs. This partnership also ensures that parents remain well informed and reassured about their children's progress. Pupils with SEND and those who are disadvantaged are consistently included and play an integral part in school life. Leaders make effective use of pupil premium funding to close gaps in essential skills, such as reading, writing and mathematics. Staff address these gaps promptly and successfully. They check pupils' knowledge regularly to ensure that any support or targeted teaching has the intended outcome. Staff tailor learning tasks to meet individual needs, which enables pupils to achieve well. For some pupils, the school works with external agencies to make sure that pupils have more specialised support. Leaders are proactive in seeking the best support available. Staff prioritise pupils' wellbeing. Pupils learn to recognise and understand their emotions. Staff regularly check in with pupils to make sure they are ready and able to learn. They are well trained and provide effective targeted support whenever necessary to address pupils' needs.

Leadership and governance

Expected standard

Leaders and governors have focused on addressing the areas identified in the previous inspection report. This work has a positive impact on pupils and the education that they receive, including those pupils who face additional barriers. For example, the sharp focus on reading means the school's chosen programme is well taught. It enables pupils to develop their reading skills quickly and confidently. Staff now have the training they need to teach most subjects well. This is delivered through a high-quality, evidence-informed development programme. Additionally, children in the early years benefit from a strong focus on developing their communication and language skills, preparing them well for their next stage. Governors meet their statutory duties. They work closely with leaders to hold them to account while also providing support. This partnership has contributed to the improvements noted above. The school continues to face and respond well to challenges linked to financial constraints and falling pupil numbers in the local area. Staff say leaders are considerate of their workload and wellbeing. Parents and carers are overwhelmingly positive about the school, its staff and its leaders. Leaders have an accurate understanding of the school's strengths and priorities. Their plan is to further develop all areas of the curriculum so that they are taught, as well as reading, writing and mathematics.

Personal development and wellbeing

Expected standard

The school provides a well-considered personal development offer. Leaders adapt the curriculum when necessary to address emerging issues in school or the wider community. For example, pupils are currently

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learning how to work well as part of a team. This strengthens their sense of belonging, particularly for those who are disadvantaged. The relationships and sex education and health education curriculum is suitable for pupils' ages and stages. For example, it helps pupils to understand when and how to report a concern to an adult. Across the school, pupils show compassion and respect for others. This is because staff teach them how to recognise and value others' feelings. Additionally, pupils learn about diversity and age-appropriate ethical issues. Sometimes, this is through books and stories. These help them to show empathy and understand differences. For example, pupils shared a book that explored the experiences of a child who is a refugee. Pupils are encouraged to discuss ideas and share their own thoughts in a safe space. Staff who teach younger children help them to develop positive emotional wellbeing. This means that they are ready to learn. Across the school, pupils have many roles and responsibilities. These build their self-confidence and an age-appropriate understanding of their place in the wider community. This is strengthened through visits to enrich learning across subjects, such as history. This helps pupils to learn about fundamental British values such as democracy.

Pupils develop their interests and talents in physical education (PE), art and singing. Many pupils express a particular interest in PE due to the skills they are learning. Leaders and staff value pupils' voice. For example, they tackle issues that are important to the pupils. Staff listen carefully and offer ideas. Pupils respond very well because they know that their opinions are valued. This is a key part of how the school successfully teaches pupils to work together to resolve conflict.

What it's like to be a pupil at this school

Pupils are at the heart of this small, caring school. They arrive eager to learn because lessons are enjoyable and achievable. Staff understand how each pupil learns and build on their individual strengths. When challenges arise, pupils receive the support that they need to overcome them. This helps them to develop resilience and achieve well overall. Even when learning feels difficult, pupils stay positive and keep trying. This determination prepares them well for every stage of their education. From the moment pupils start school, they quickly form strong relationships. Pupils themselves say, 'Teamwork is the dream work,' reflecting the school's positive culture. Pupils know they are an important part of the school community. This makes them feel valued. Pupils show high levels of attendance. Pupils learn why it is important to behave well. Staff talk to them about how they might respond in different situations, for example, if they fall out with someone at playtime. This helps them develop strategies to manage challenges by themselves. Importantly, there is always an adult to help if needed. Pupils behave well because staff guide them calmly and consistently. These taught and practised skills mean that the school is a harmonious environment where pupils feel safe. Bullying is rare. Staff act promptly to stop it if it occurs. Pupils understand that our world is diverse. They are proud of their own heritage as well as those of others. Pupils are well prepared for life in modern Britain. This is because they show compassion and understanding towards others. The school provides meaningful opportunities for pupils to develop new talents, such as learning a form of parkour. This helps them to build important physical skills, such as balance and strength. Pupils recognise and appreciate each other's developing talents.

Next steps

- Leaders should further strengthen the consistency and quality of teaching across the curriculum to ensure that all subjects are taught equally well. This includes strengthening their work to support pupils in applying their

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foundational writing knowledge across subjects beyond English, so their written work is of a consistently high quality.

Attendance and behaviour

Strong standard

Leaders ensure that pupils attend school well. The importance of school attendance is clearly explained to parents and carers. The interesting curriculum and well-adapted learning tasks ensure that pupils can complete learning tasks with confidence. This raises their self-esteem and their enjoyment of school. Pupils follow school routines with confidence. Staff are highly effective in helping pupils understand the importance of rules. They guide pupils with kindness and apply behaviour strategies consistently. Even the youngest children settle quickly and know what is expected of them. They listen carefully to each other and take turns. Across the school, pupils show compassion for others because staff teach them to recognise and value the feelings of others. Leaders and staff have developed a school community where learning comes first. Pupils of all ages do well and grow in confidence. Over time, they learn self-discipline and resilience, even when things are hard. Staff make sensible adjustments for pupils who need extra help, and these make a positive difference. Classrooms are calm and purposeful. Staff quickly notice when pupils are having a difficult day. They provide timely support. In the playground, pupils of all ages show remarkable independence when creating games and playing fairly. Bullying, discrimination and unkindness are rare and addressed effectively. Expected standard

For detailed performance data including disadvantage gap analysis, historical trends, and comparison tables, visit the school's profile on WhatSchool:

<https://whatschool.ai/en/school/ridgmont-lower-school-bedford>