

Inspection of Katherine Semar Infant School

Ross Close, Saffron Walden, Essex CB11 4DU

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| Inspection dates: | 21 and 22 January 2025 |
| The quality of education | Outstanding |
| Behaviour and attitudes | Outstanding |
| Personal development | Outstanding |
| Leadership and management | Outstanding |
| Early years provision | Outstanding |
| Previous inspection grade | Not previously inspected under section 5 of the Education Act 2005 |

The headteacher of this school is Julie Puxley. This school is part of Saffron 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), Caroline Derbyshire, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by David Barrs.

Until November 2020, the school was exempt from routine inspection because it was judged as outstanding for overall effectiveness at its previous inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005. The school has not been inspected under section 5 of the Act since October 2010. Since September 2024, schools have not been awarded an overall effectiveness grade.

Ofsted has not previously inspected Katherine Semar Infant School under section 5 of the Education Act 2005. However, Ofsted previously judged Katherine Semar Infant School to be outstanding for overall effectiveness, before it opened as Katherine Semar Infant School as a result of conversion to academy status.

What is it like to attend this school?

Katherine Semar Infant School is a nurturing and exciting place to learn. Pupils thrive here. The school's chosen 'Inspire' curriculum is ambitious and pupils achieve highly. Pupils are enthusiastic about their learning. They look forward to the exciting lessons that staff prepare for them. They are keen to do their best.

Beginning in the early years, children learn the school's values. They learn to be curious, resilient, respectful and confident. Pupils' behaviour is impressive, and even the youngest children show high levels of self-control. They follow the school rules consistently well.

Relationships with staff are extremely caring and supportive. The staff know pupils well and respond to changes in pupils' needs promptly. This ensures that pupils are focused on their learning. Pupils know that their voice matters. The school has used the 'suggestion box' to listen to pupils' views.

Learning about other cultures and religions permeates through the curriculum. For example, in assemblies, pupils learn about musicians from around the world. Pupils have a strong understanding of their place in the world. They are confident talking about their experiences of trips and how this connects with their learning. They talk about celebrating differences and why it is important to be different.

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

The school's curriculum is well designed. It sets out key ways that the staff teach pupils to improve their work over time. This includes effective questioning and experiences and opportunities for pupils to be creative. Staff are highly skilled. They benefit from training that helps them to improve. Staff teach the curriculum effectively and, as a result, pupils achieve highly.

Support for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) is extremely effective. The school identifies pupils' needs promptly. This enables staff to provide effective and timely support. The staff know pupils well. Learning is carefully adapted so that pupils can be successful in their learning.

The school's comprehensive phonics programme enables pupils to learn the sounds that letters make. Staff quickly identify pupils who are not keeping up with the programme. Beginning in the early years, staff provide children with effective support. Pupils learn the structure of phonics. They recall their learning and apply this to their reading and writing. From Reception, pupils enjoy sharing stories and retelling stories through role play. Pupils learn to be confident, fluent readers.

Pupils behave impressively well in their lessons and when moving around the school. They are kind and caring towards each other. Pupils enjoy the structured playground games offered by the junior school pupils. The school's careful focus on its values of curiosity, confidence and resilience filter throughout pupils' learning of its curriculum. This helps

pupils to understand what it means to be a good learner. Pupils are independent, curious and proud of their learning and achievements.

The school has a rigorous approach to monitoring attendance. It identifies pupils who are not attending regularly. Timely support is provided so that attendance improves quickly. The school supports any families who need encouragement to be an active part of the school community. This work has a positive impact on the pupils' attendance and their involvement in school activities, such as after-school clubs.

From early years onwards, pupils learn to appreciate the world around them. They take part in local trips and visits that help them to connect their learning. Pupils enjoy roles such as school council, class ambassadors and eco council. The school council are proud of how they make the school an even better place to learn.

The school's charter sets out rich experiences that pupils will have. These include stroking an owl, watching a live theatre performance and exploring a castle. From Reception, pupils learn about the important contributions of different people in society, such as women in science. They learn about other cultures and religions. The school teaches pupils to act on their opinions thoughtfully to influence change in the world around them. These experiences are effectively interlinked in the curriculum so that pupils remember them.

The school's leadership team is ambitious and absolutely determined to ensure that the pupils get the best possible education. The trust and the local governing board support the school impressively well to deliver its vision. The school both challenges and supports staff expertly. The school ensures that it provides highly effective opportunities for staff to develop their expertise. Staff are extremely proud and positive to be part of the team and benefit from the support they receive from the school.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

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

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| Unique reference number | 141574 |
| Local authority | Essex |
| Inspection number | 10288538 |
| Type of school | Infant |
| School category | Academy converter |
| Age range of pupils | 4 to 7 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number of pupils on the school roll | 180 |
| Appropriate authority | Board of trustees |
| Chair of trust | David Barrs |
| CEO of the trust | Caroline Derbyshire |
| Headteacher | Julie Puxley |
| Website | www.katherinesemar.co.uk |
| Dates of previous inspection | 6 and 7 October 2010, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005 |

Information about this school

- The school runs a wraparound provision at the school. This includes breakfast and after-school provision.
- The school is not using any alternative provision at this time.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005. During a graded inspection, we grade the school for each of our key judgements (quality of education; behaviour and attitudes; personal development; and leadership and management) and for any relevant provision judgement (early years and/or sixth form provision). Schools receiving a graded inspection from September 2024, will not be given an overall effectiveness grade

- 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. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- During the inspection, the inspectors met with the headteacher and other leaders to discuss the school's curriculum and its work in terms of the curriculum, behaviour and attendance. The lead inspector met with the chair of governors, trustees and other governors to gather information about the school's work.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics, art, and design and technology. For each deep dive, inspectors held discussions about the curriculum, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. The lead inspector listened to pupils reading to a familiar adult.
- The inspectors considered the responses to Ofsted's staff and pupil surveys. Inspectors considered the responses to Ofsted Parent View, including comments submitted via the free-text facility. The inspectors also spoke to some parents in person.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspectors: 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

Nerrissa Bear, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Ania Vaughan

Ofsted Inspector

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