

Inspection of Katherine Semar Junior School

Ross Close, Saffron Walden, Essex CB11 4DU

Inspection dates:	18 and 19 March 2025
The quality of education	Outstanding
Behaviour and attitudes	Outstanding
Personal development	Outstanding
Leadership and management	Outstanding
Previous inspection grade	Not previously inspected under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Ofsted has not previously inspected Katherine Semar Junior School under section 5 of the Education Act 2005. However, Ofsted previously judged Katherine Semar Junior School to be outstanding for overall effectiveness, before it opened as an academy. Since September 2024, schools have not been awarded an overall effectiveness grade.

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.

What is it like to attend this school?

Katherine Semar Junior School strives to be a 'nurturing school of exceptional quality', and it achieves this vision. Pupils feel safe, are well cared for and achieve a very high standard, both academically and more widely. Pupils develop into mature, articulate and respectful citizens.

Behaviour in class and around the school is exemplary. Pupils' love of learning means they are happy and attend well. Classrooms are calm, orderly and productive. Owing to pupils' excellent learning behaviours, no time is lost.

Playtime is a happy time for all. Pupil leaders take on various roles and responsibilities to make this time of the day proceed seamlessly. The library monitors ensure all pupils can access the well-resourced library, while play leaders organise structured games for their younger peers. Other pupils socialise happily, creating their own games or engaging in imaginative play.

The vast range of wider opportunities means there is something for everyone. There are clubs and squads for sports, arts and music. All pupils get the chance to participate, while they can also perform and excel through the many competitions and performances they enjoy. Any pupil not engaging in these wider opportunities is identified. The school supports them to ensure they benefit too.

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

The school has designed an ambitious and carefully sequenced curriculum across the different subjects. Working alongside the adjoining infant school, there is clear progression in what pupils learn year-on-year.

A love of reading emanates across the school. Any pupil who arrives needing some extra support receives this straight away. Well-trained adults help pupils with their phonics to ensure they become fluent, confident readers. Once pupils are ready to move on, they access a carefully structured reading curriculum. All pupils read a wide range of different books and are exposed to rich vocabulary as part of their learning. This enables them to build up a strong bank of words and knowledge about the wider world.

Well-trained teachers deliver the curriculum in a highly effective way. An agreed structure supports staff to teach in a clear and precise manner. Prior learning is routinely revisited. Pupils' learning is checked before staff move on to something new. New content is introduced clearly, and pupils have lots of opportunities to practise what they have been taught. This consistent approach enables pupils to remember the key knowledge and vocabulary securely. They talk freely and confidently about what they have learned. Pupils achieve exceptionally well across the different curriculum subjects.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are well supported. Adults make careful adaptations to the work, removing any barriers to learning. Many pupils access the same learning as their peers. Some pupils with SEND need a more bespoke

approach. This is provided. Pupils with SEND succeed in learning a curriculum that is right for them.

There are high expectations for behaviour across the school. The school's approach is built around the positive relationships pupils have with staff. Pupils know what adults expect and successfully meet these expectations. Pupils know their behaviour choices help them to learn. Learning proceeds without disruption.

The personal development curriculum provided to pupils is highly impactful. Underpinned by the school's values, pupils learn to become responsible and respectful citizens. They talk confidently about the importance of equality and are highly respectful of differences. Trips, such as to places of worship, support pupils to respect different cultures and beliefs. Everyone feels welcome at this school due to the positive and inclusive ethos that the school promotes.

The trust and those responsible for governance provide strong support and challenge. They recognise the many strengths of the school. Equally, they continue to challenge leaders to drive further developments and improvements.

Staff are proud to work at this school. They feel fully appreciated by school and trust leaders and know their well-being is always considered. Staff also value the training they receive to support their professional growth. There is a very strong sense of cohesion across the school team.

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

Unique reference number	141572
Local authority	Essex
Inspection number	10345400
Type of school	Junior
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	7 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	249
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	David Barrs
CEO of the trust	Caroline Derbyshire
Headteacher	Julie Puxley
Website	www.katherinesemar.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	24 November 2020, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school runs a wraparound provision at the school. This includes breakfast and after-school provisions.
- 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.
- Inspectors held meetings with the headteacher, senior leaders, the special educational needs co-ordinator, subject leaders, staff, members of the local governing body, a trustee and representatives from the central trust team, including the CEO.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: reading, mathematics, science and art and design. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke with teachers, spoke with pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. The lead inspector also listened to pupils reading with a familiar member of staff.
- Inspectors also discussed the curriculum and reviewed pupils' work in some other subjects.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, 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' interest first.
- The inspectors considered the views of parents through responses to the online survey, Ofsted Parent View, and from parents spoken to during the inspection.
- The inspectors gathered the views of pupils and staff through Ofsted's pupil and staff surveys, as well as discussions conducted throughout the inspection.

Inspection team

Jonny Wallace, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Danny Wagstaff

Ofsted Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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Textphone: 0161 618 8524
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