

Inspection of a good school: Hermitage Primary School

Hampstead Norreys Road, Thatcham, Berkshire RG18 9SA

Inspection dates: 24–25 September 2019

Outcome

Hermitage Primary School continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils greatly enjoy their education. The warmth of staff and range of interesting activities are features they particularly value. Pupils are especially proud of their sporting prowess. They enjoy competing in a range of sports, often achieving great success. Pupils are delighted that the school has recently gained an award for its sports provision. Keeping fit, safe and healthy is at the top of pupils' list of priorities.

Adults want the best for pupils. Pupils' behaviour and attention to learning in the classroom is excellent in almost every key stage. Children in the early years are attentive and buzz with excitement. They feel secure and settled at this early stage of this academic year. Older pupils listen well and are respectful to one another's viewpoints. Most of the time, learning proceeds without interruption. In key stage 1, a small proportion of boys lose interest and need support from adults to get back on track.

Pupils say that there isn't any bullying. They confirm that pupils get along well together. Pupils enjoy playtimes as there are a whole host of physical activities on offer. Table tennis, skipping, basketball are all popular choices.

Pupils sing the praises of the headteacher. They say that the changes she is making are for the better. For instance, pupils are thrilled with adjustments to lunchtimes. Now, older pupils like sitting to eat lunch, and playing together, with their younger peers. Pupils say that everyone gets along, including across the different age ranges.

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

Pupils show that the school's curriculum has served them well. They enjoy their learning, especially the emphasis placed upon outdoor experience. The curriculum is planned well. Pupils remember key concepts from previous learning in a range of subjects. They retain what is important. As pupils move through their schooling they are well prepared for challenges that lie ahead.

Some thought has gone into how well the curriculum is organised. The school's approach enables pupils to become curious and develop an enquiring mindset. Pupils listen hard and try their best. However, in a few areas, subject-specific knowledge is less well sequenced and emphasised. For instance, pupils' understanding of terms like society, civilisation and monarchy in history are underdeveloped.

Leaders ensure that staff regularly receive useful training. This supports staffs' ongoing development well and complements leaders' school development priorities. Staff keep up to date and are continually honing their skills. In phonics (letters and the sounds they represent), staff who have recently trained pronounce letters and sounds well. They support the very youngest children getting to grips with early reading. In some subjects, outside expertise supports teachers to develop their skills. This is particularly the case in physical education.

Provision for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) is first-rate. Pupils with SEND experience a full curricular offer. They are well supported by highly skilled teaching assistants. The school's special educational needs coordinator (SENCo) oversees the provision strongly. Top of the list is ensuring that liaison with a variety of external professionals is strong. The SENCo ensures that staff receive regular training. This is because the school works so closely with local authority advisers. Pupils' provision is adapted well so that they can succeed in their learning. These pupils are fully included and achieve well.

The teaching of early reading is secure. Most adults display expert knowledge, modelling sounds clearly. This is exemplified in the early years. Here adults keep a close eye on how well children are progressing. However, when staff have not trained recently, their subject knowledge is less secure. Sometimes key sounds that pupils need to remember are not emphasised strongly. Even so, in much of the school the teaching of early reading is effective. Pupils develop fluency and accuracy, including those who need to catch up.

Pupils are heard to read regularly by a variety of different adults. However, in key stage 2, pupils' experiences of more demanding texts are less well guided by adults. Pupils are yet to develop a self-driven secure love of reading. Consequently, they often make narrow choices, sticking to the same genre or author. Nevertheless, staff are well informed about great books. They are doing all they can to get pupils reading high-quality texts. However, teachers know that their efforts have not reaped the reward they were hoping for. Pupils are yet to truly become bookworms.

The headteacher is very understanding about the pressures that the profession can bring. Leaders adopt a hands-on approach to overseeing staff workload. Adaptations have been made that ensure that teachers are not overloaded with bureaucratic tasks. Proactive steps are in place. These include: a revised approach to marking, an adjusted planning format and a considered approach to reporting to parents. Staff are appreciative of leaders' efforts to managing their workload.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Staff receive thorough training. Adults regularly reflect on the local context and learn from others' experiences. Any concerns are logged carefully and followed up thoroughly. Now and again this means seeking guidance from outside agencies, such as children's social care. Leaders take all concerns seriously and act upon them.

From the start of the day, adults, including those who work in the wraparound care facility, prioritise pupils' well-being. Staff manage pupils' needs well, such as retaining sharp oversight of pupils' medical needs. Pupils are particularly pleased with recent improvements to the school site.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Pupils in key stage 2 have a limited experience of reading challenging texts. Pupils' fascination with the world of literature is underdeveloped. Staff know that their efforts have not yet ignited pupils' passion for reading widely. Leaders need to ensure that pupils are guided more closely to select and enjoy a wide range of high-quality literature to strengthen pupils' enthusiasm for books.
- Pupils do not always remember key knowledge associated with the study of history and geography. This is because teachers are not always clear about which aspects need to be emphasised. Leaders should review the humanities curriculum so that there is greater emphasis on the subject-specific knowledge that pupils need to acquire.

Background

When we have judged a school to be good we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains good. This is called a section 8 inspection of a good school or non-exempt outstanding school. We do not give graded judgements on a section 8 inspection. However, if we find some evidence that the school could now be better than good or that standards may be declining, then the next inspection will be a section 5 inspection. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the section 8 inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will convert the section 8 inspection to a section 5 inspection immediately.

This is the first section 8 inspection since we judged Hermitage Primary School to be good on 10–11 February 2016.

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 Ofsted Parent View information 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.

If you are not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

In the report, '[disadvantaged pupils](#)' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route.

School details

Unique reference number	109815
Local authority	West Berkshire
Inspection number	10111296
Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	5 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	181
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Mr Andrew Murray
Headteacher	Mrs Gillian Turner
Website	https://hermitage-westberks.secure-dbprimary.com/
Date of previous inspection	10–11 February 2016

Information about this school

- The headteacher took up post on a temporary basis last academic year, 2018-19. Since September this year, the headteacher has assumed the substantive role.
- Hermitage Primary School is a smaller-than-average-sized primary school.
- The school operates a before- and after-school club each day. It offers wraparound care for pupils who attend the school.

Information about this inspection

- I met with the headteacher, deputy headteacher and all teaching staff who were present during the inspection.
- A meeting was held with the chair of the governing body and two other governors. The lead inspector also spoke to a local authority representative on the telephone.
- To check on the quality of education, the inspection focused mainly on reading, mathematics and history. I met with subject leaders, visited lessons in all classes, talked to pupils about their work and discussed the school's approach to curriculum

delivery with teaching staff. Some pupils read to an inspector.

- The school's safeguarding arrangements were reviewed. I met with the school's designated safeguarding lead, scrutinised the school's single central record and talked to pupils about safety. I also considered how well adults in the school act on emerging concerns about pupils' welfare.
- During the inspection, survey responses from 21 members of staff and 69 parents were considered. Two parents submitted the views via telephone calls. Pupils also met with the lead inspector to share their views.

Inspection team

Elizabeth Farr, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

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