

Inspection of Underhill School

Mays Lane, Barnet, Hertfordshire EN5 2LZ

Inspection dates: 24–25 September 2019

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

The quality of education

Requires improvement

Behaviour and attitudes

Good

Personal development

Outstanding

Leadership and management

Requires improvement

Early years provision

Requires improvement

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection

Good

What is it like to attend this school?

School leaders place pupils' care at the top of their agenda, very successfully. Despite this, pupils do not receive a good academic education. This is because teachers' expectations of what they can achieve academically have not been high enough. New leaders are determined to improve pupils' achievements. They know what needs to improve.

Pupils behave well. They respect each other and have a strong rapport with adults. Bullying is rare and pupils trust adults to resolve any difficulties that may arise.

In the early years, we saw children who were happy and engaged. They feel safe and secure because they know that the adults care very well for them.

Pupils told us that they enjoy coming to school. They value the many educational visits and plentiful extra-curricular enrichment opportunities on offer. There is something for everyone and uptake is very high. Staff assist pupils in developing their individual talents further and beyond the school. These include in performing arts, debating and sport. Pupils take on responsibilities and learn to contribute positively to society. They gain in self-confidence and learn to be resilient. Despite weaknesses in their academic knowledge, pupils settle down well in secondary school. This is because of their excellent personal development.

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

The interim headteacher knows that the quality of education is not good enough. Pupils are not prepared well enough for the academic demands of secondary school.

Subject planning is lacking in ambition. It does not make clear what leaders want pupils to know and be able to do. Teachers do not challenge pupils to think hard and stretch themselves. As a result, too many pupils do not achieve well academically.

The new leadership team has started to tackle these weaknesses. Leaders have organised teams to improve planning across the subjects. This work is at an early stage. They have made a firm start in developing mathematics and science.

Last year, the leadership team prioritised improvements in reading. Teachers are guided and trained on how to teach reading in a systematic way. They place an emphasis on helping pupils broaden their vocabulary and comprehension. Pupils take books home and read with an adult. Pupils enjoy hearing adults read aloud to them. Staff identify those falling behind in their reading and help them to catch up. Because of these improvements, pupils are better developing their reading skills.

Leaders make sure that pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) get very strong pastoral support. This helps to meet their well-being needs.

Children's progress in the early years requires improvement. Children do not leave

Reception with the knowledge typical for their age. This is because learning is not planned carefully enough. Resources are not used well to help children in their learning.

Children get off to a slow start in Reception with their early reading. Staff do not build on children's phonics knowledge from Nursery quickly enough.

Pupils' behaviour in class and around the school is good. They work well together in pairs and groups. They made it clear to us that sanctions are fair. They prefer getting rewarded for good behaviour and attendance.

Many pupils join the school with low self-esteem and a variety of learning and emotional needs. The school offers them an extensive range of support, experiences and opportunities. The school runs social skills groups and gives pupils access to a raft of therapists. These support their needs effectively. The school participates in local and national initiatives, including a programme to promote resilience, a national project to tackle hate and a scheme to support mental health.

Pupils develop their physical health through taking part in many sporting activities. The school sends the most talented at sport to specialist training academies. Pupils cherish contributing to the school and wider community. Trained 'blues busters' assist pupils in sorting out any minor problems. Pupils organise fund-raising activities to support local, national and international charities. They take part in inter-school debating competitions. Gifted singers perform in the London Youth Choir.

Pupils gain a deep understanding of the challenges of modern life. Visiting speakers motivate pupils to successfully overcome life's barriers. Pupils benefit from many visits to museums, art galleries, the theatre and places of worship. Through lessons and assemblies, pupils learn about current affairs. They mark events such as international Holocaust Memorial Day.

The school carries out exemplary work developing pupils' sense of community spirit, self-confidence and personal resilience. These characteristics prepare them very effectively for the next stages of their lives, notwithstanding the weaknesses in their knowledge.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders put pupils' safety and well-being at the heart of their work. They know the families and local community well. They are aware of the potential risks and vulnerabilities that pupils may face. Staff are vigilant and know what to look out for. They report any concerns that they have.

Leaders work with many external agencies. This supports pupils' safety and welfare effectively, and the same applies to their families.

Pupils learn about danger in different situations and how to avoid risks. Staff also invite parents and carers to workshops, such as on internet safety, grooming and gangs.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The curriculum in reading, mathematics and science is improving. In other subjects, the curriculum is not delivered effectively enough. This means that pupils do not meet their potential. They are not well prepared academically for the next stages of their education. Leaders should be more ambitious and clarify what they want pupils to know and remember. They should ensure that in all subjects, they plan sequentially the components of knowledge that pupils need to succeed in their learning. They should plan recall activities as necessary to build secure understanding.
- In the early years, children's social and emotional development is strong. Academically, they get off to a slow start, especially in their reading. Leaders should ensure that children are well prepared for learning as they enter Year 1, including in early reading and mathematics. They should plan the academic curriculum coherently and sequentially to enable pupils and children to make strong progress. They need to make sure that resources are stimulating enough and well-matched to what adults want children to learn.

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're 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	101301
Local authority	Barnet
Inspection number	10121547
Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	530
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Kerri-Anne Wakefield
Headteacher	Jenny Matthews (acting)
Website	www.underhillschool.org
Date of previous inspection	8–9 March 2016

Information about this school

- The executive headteacher left the school at the end of the last academic year. The governing body appointed the former head of school and deputy heads of school as interim headteacher and deputy headteachers.
- Since the start of this academic year, the school no longer offers provision for two-year-olds. Because of falling numbers, some year groups have reduced from three to two forms.

Information about this inspection

We carried out this inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

- We met with the interim headteacher and deputies, the inclusion leader and some middle leaders. The lead inspector spoke to a representative of the local authority. He met with the chair of the governing body, as well as four other governors.
- We considered, in depth, the curriculum areas of reading, mathematics, science and design technology. This included discussions with leaders about how they plan the curriculum to ensure that pupils systematically learn and remember more; the guidance they give to teachers; and how they ensure that teachers gain strong subject knowledge. Inspectors also visited lessons, spoke with groups

of pupils in some of those classes about their learning, and scrutinised pupils' work. They also had discussions with the teachers of the classes that they visited. Other subjects were also considered as part of the inspection.

- We checked the school's policies and records and spoke with the designated safeguarding leader, senior leaders, governors, pupils, staff and parents to check on the school's culture of safeguarding.
- We also checked a range of other documentation. We had formal meetings with staff and pupils and spoke with pupils during social times, and we observed pupils arriving and leaving school.

Inspection team

David Radomsky, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Janice Howkins	Ofsted Inspector
Joanna Jones	Ofsted Inspector

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