

Inspection of a good school: Margaret Wix Primary School

High Oaks, St Albans, Hertfordshire AL3 6EL

Inspection dates:

19–20 November 2019

Outcome

Margaret Wix Primary School continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils enjoy school. They feel happy, safe and well cared for. They are very proud of their school and have a strong sense of belonging. They wear their uniform with pride. They rise to the teachers' challenge that all pupils can do the best they can.

A calm, hard-working atmosphere permeates the school. Teachers know their pupils extremely well. Classrooms are clean, bright and welcoming. They display eye-catching work to support learning. Pupils cooperate very well and show mutual respect for each other. Many pupils are especially enthusiastic about reading. They express with sheer delight their pleasure in reading in class and visiting the school library.

This is an inclusive school. Pupils told me it is fine to be different. The caring and supportive ethos enables new pupils to swiftly become part of the school community, which has a real family feel. Maggie, the pupils' well-being dog, greets pupils at the start and end of most school days.

Pupils conduct themselves well and are polite and sensible. They feel safe in school and confident that adults will help them if they have any concerns. Bullying is rare and pupils have faith in staff to deal with any unkindness that may occur.

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

Pupils at Margaret Wix Primary School receive a good quality of education. Leaders are passionate in their desire to provide a curriculum that motivates and inspires pupils to learn. They have planned the curriculum to give pupils opportunities to learn new knowledge and skills in a logical sequence across different subjects. Teachers plan lessons that build on what pupils have done before. Leaders recognise that pupils should do even better in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of key stage 2.

Reading has a very high profile in the school. A love of reading is fostered from the moment pupils start at the school. In early years, staff focus on developing children's

listening skills from when they start in Nursery. Teaching is focused to support pupils who are learning new sounds. Books match the sounds that pupils have learned. Teachers know their pupils well and match books to pupils' needs. Pupils enthusiastically read their books to staff. They make regular use of the well-stocked library.

In subject plans for mathematics, geography and history, the content is well sequenced. Teaching builds on pupils' prior knowledge. This enables pupils to remember important information. Pupils enjoy learning in geography lessons because new learning is sensibly organised, thought provoking and fun. Teaching in history develops pupils' curiosity and arouses their interest in the past. For mathematics, leaders have mapped out the knowledge and skills that they want pupils to learn and in what order. This means that teachers know what to teach and when, but some need more support with their knowledge of how to teach mathematics.

In the early years, children make a good start to their education. They develop strong relationships with staff. Well-trained staff and inspiring learning activities help to ensure that children achieve well. Children are cooperative and curious, and enjoy learning.

Pupils conduct themselves extremely well in lessons and around the school. During social times, pupils play well together and are polite and courteous. They are considerate of each other. Pupils especially love playing in the wonderful outdoor area. They respond well to staff instructions, and line up quickly and sensibly at the end of playtime.

Leaders ensure that support for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) is well planned and designed to meet their individual needs. The pupils are well supported in class and by additional activities as required. Pupils are encouraged to develop their independence.

Parents are overwhelmingly positive about the school's work. Leaders communicate well with parents and carers. They are always keen to welcome parents and carers into the life of the school; for example, parents come in for 'family fortnight'. This gives parents an insight into learning in the classroom on a specific target area for their child's class.

The school is well led and managed. Leaders constantly look for ways of making the school even better for pupils. Staff morale is high. Leaders and governors have ensured that staff workload is taken into account when introducing new policies and procedures to avoid placing unnecessary burdens on staff.

Governors have a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities. All governors except the chair of governors are new to the school since the previous inspection. They are ambitious for the school and have high expectations. Governors know a lot about the quality of provision for English and mathematics, but not enough about the full range of the curriculum.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders give safeguarding the highest priority. Staff take pupils' welfare seriously. All staff receive regular training to keep up to date about their safeguarding responsibilities. They know the procedures to follow if they have any concerns. They are determined to ensure that vulnerable pupils get the support they need. Records show that leaders take appropriate action in response to concerns about pupils' safety and welfare. All checks on the suitability of people to visit the school or to be employed as members or staff are fully in place. The recruitment of staff is managed well.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The curriculum for mathematics is carefully designed and sequenced. Leaders have made clear what they want pupils to know over the course of their primary education. Some staff do not have the good subject knowledge needed to plan and deliver the mathematics curriculum and raise standards further.
- Governors do not rigorously challenge leaders about the quality of education in the foundation subjects. They do not have a detailed enough comprehension of how well pupils are doing in subjects other than English and mathematics. Governors need to hold leaders accountable for the standard of education provided in all subjects.
- Leaders and the governing body need to move forwards with their plans to ensure that expectations are even higher for all pupils, so that more achieve highly by the end of key stage 2.

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 Margaret Wix Primary School to be good on 15–16 March 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	117188
Local authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	10110311
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	182
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Emily Watson
Headteacher	Damien Johnston
Website	www.margaretwix.herts.sch.uk/
Date of previous inspection	15–16 March 2016

Information about this school

- The school is smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- The proportions of pupils from minority ethnic groups and those who speak English as an additional language are above average. About half of the pupils come from a wide range of heritages, with pupils from Asian and Asian British (mainly Bangladeshi) heritage being the largest group.
- The proportion of pupils supported by the pupil premium is above average.
- The proportion of pupils with SEND is above the national average.
- The early years provides part-time nursery education and full-time education for children in the Reception class.
- Pupil mobility is high. A much larger than average proportion of children join or leave the school other than at normal times. Some of the pupils who enter the school mid-way through the year do not speak English.
- All governors, apart from the chair of the governing body, have been appointed since the previous inspection.
- The headteacher joined the school in September 2015.

Information about this inspection

- I met with the headteacher, the assistant headteacher and other leaders including the inclusion leader and curriculum leaders. I also met with the chair of the governing body and four other governors.
- A telephone conversation was held with the district school effectiveness adviser from the local authority.
- Deep dives were carried out in reading, mathematics and humanities (geography and history). For each of these areas, I spoke to senior leaders, curriculum leaders, teachers and pupils, visited lessons and looked at pupils' work.
- To inspect safeguarding arrangements, I spoke to the designated safeguarding leader, checked the single central record, looked at the responses to the parent, pupil and staff surveys, spoke to pupils and spoke to the local authority representative.
- I observed pupils' behaviour in lessons, moving around the school and in the playground, and asked pupils for their views on behaviour and bullying.
- A wide range of documentation was scrutinised including the school's own evaluation and development plan and external reports.
- I took into account 41 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, including 39 written comments and one email from a parent. I also considered responses from 17 staff who completed Ofsted's survey. There were no responses to the pupil questionnaire. To gain their views of the school, I spoke with pupils during the school day.

Inspection team

Stefanie Lipinski-Barltrop, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

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