

Inspection of a good school: Powell Corderoy Primary School

Longfield Road, Dorking, Surrey, RH4 3DF

Inspection dates:

14–15 July 2021

Outcome

Powell Corderoy Primary School continues to be a good school.

However, inspectors have some concerns that one or more areas may be declining, as set out below.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils enjoy coming to school. They value their education and approach their learning with enthusiasm. Pupils are 'proud to be Powell' and appreciate the school's well-established traditions. For example, the annual summer festival with the procession of the May Queen. Pupils told inspectors that they feel safe at school and that bullying is rare.

Leaders are ambitious for every child to learn happily and develop the confidence they need. Expectations are not clear enough in some curriculum areas, particularly reading. This has the greatest impact on pupils who find learning to read harder, including pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND).

Pupils are polite and well mannered. They follow the school rules, always trying to do their best. Leaders ensure that pupils have access to expansive outdoor areas all year. At play times, inspectors saw pupils using these spaces to play imaginative games, such as 'cops and robbers'.

Pupils and their parents feel a great sense of community and belonging within the school. Parents told inspectors that staff go above and beyond for their children. They appreciate that leaders focus on the 'whole child', and pupils take part in a range of enriching activities, including forest school.

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

Leaders want pupils to study an ambitious and well-sequenced curriculum in all subjects. To achieve this, leaders were designing and trialling a new approach to curriculum design prior to the COVID-19 (coronavirus) pandemic. In some subjects, for example in physical education (PE) and mathematics, this work was complete when the pandemic hit and, therefore, staff were able to continue to deliver these subjects following the new curriculum. In these subjects, the curriculum is well designed and sequenced and

teachers use a range of strategies to keep track of how well pupils are learning. Pupils enjoy their learning and appreciate how lessons are organised to help them remember what has been taught before. All pupils, including those with SEND, learn well in these subjects.

Other subjects, for example art and geography, are at an earlier stage of development. Leaders have not yet planned exactly what pupils will learn and when across the curriculum, and so it is harder for teachers to build on what pupils have learned previously. As a result, pupils are not yet developing their knowledge and understanding as well in these subjects. Alongside their curriculum work, leaders are also rightly focusing on developing pupils' vocabularies. Staff training to support this work is scheduled to take place this term.

While in some areas of the curriculum, leaders have high expectations for every child, this is not always the case for reading. Weaker readers, and pupils with SEND are being allowed to fall behind in early years and key stage 1. This is because, while the needs of pupils with SEND are identified carefully, there is not a strong early reading curriculum. Although children in Reception learn phonics right from the start, leaders have not maintained their expectations of what children need to learn term by term. As a result, by the end of Year 1, too many pupils are unable to use their phonics to read at an age-appropriate standard.

Not all staff have not received the training they need to develop the necessary expertise to teach all children to read. The books that the youngest children and pupils read are not matched closely enough to the sounds they have learned. Therefore, not all pupils experience that vital sense of success in their early reading. Leaders have not made sure that there is a coherent and consistent approach to reading across the rest of the school. Pupils in many classes told inspectors that their teachers did not read to them every day. Leaders are now trialling a new phonics programme in Year 1.

Leaders have carefully developed their personal development programme, keeping the needs of disadvantaged pupils in mind. Leaders have sensibly adapted the programme in response to the pandemic. Pupils in all classes behave well and follow adult direction.

Staff told inspectors that leaders engaged with them very well around workload. They felt that having an acting co-headteacher with teaching responsibilities helped leaders keep 'one foot firmly on the ground'. Staff particularly appreciate the supportive approach leaders took during the pandemic.

Governors want Powell Corderoy to be an excellent school at the heart of the local community. They are currently refreshing their plans to show how this will be achieved. Over the past year, there has been considerable disruption to the school and governors have ensured very regular contact with leaders throughout this time. Despite the pandemic, governors have continued to monitor and challenge leaders about the quality of education for pupils. However, as governors' access to the school has necessarily been limited, they have not been able to triangulate information as well as they would have liked.

In discussion with the headteacher, we agreed that the teaching of reading, particularly phonics and early reading, may usefully serve as a focus for the next inspection.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

There is a strong culture of safeguarding within the school. Leaders ensure that staff are trained to recognise signs of neglect and abuse. All staff know what to do when they have a concern about a pupil. The designated safeguarding leads are effective in pursuing concerns and in ensuring that pupils receive the help they need. Leaders are committed to ensuring that safeguarding has a high profile within the school. Staff understand the importance of prompting pupils' well-being and mental health, and this is well prioritised within the school's curriculum. Pupils told inspectors that they felt protected and safe. They had a good understanding of how to spot potential dangers and stay safe online.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- At present, the early reading provision is not effective enough to teach the weakest readers and pupils with SEND the phonics knowledge they need to read at an age-appropriate standard to by the end of Year 1. Leaders must implement a coherent phonics programme. This must include ensuring that all staff have the expertise they need to teach all pupils, including weaker readers and pupils with SEND, to read.
- Phonics books are currently organised into phonics phases. However, they are not precisely enough matched to the sounds pupils have been taught. This means there are too many sounds in the books pupils cannot successfully decode, and not all pupils get enough opportunities to practise the sounds they have been taught. This particularly affects the weakest readers, who are discouraged by not being able to successfully decode the books they are given. Leaders must ensure that phonics books connect closely to the phonics knowledge pupils are taught when they are learning to read.
- Although leaders have set out the books pupils will read in each year group across the school, there is not a consistent and coherent approach to the reading curriculum. Leaders must ensure that the reading curriculum is more precisely mapped out, so that teachers know what pupils have learned before, what they should be emphasising within a text, and what they are preparing pupils for next within the reading curriculum.
- Not all subjects in the wider curriculum are precisely and coherently sequenced. Leaders should continue their work to ensure that from Reception to Year 6 all subjects are coherently planned and sequenced towards cumulatively sufficient knowledge and skills for future learning, including for pupils with SEND.

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 or outstanding school, because it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on a section 8 inspection. However, if we find some evidence that a good 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 the school to be good on 13–14 December 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 the school and 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	125151
Local authority	Surrey
Inspection number	10201213
Type of school	Primary
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	204
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Carrie Reynolds
Headteacher	Mrs Emma McLaughlin Mrs Joanna Wilson
Website	www.powellcorderoy.co.uk/
Date of previous inspection	13–14 December 2016, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- A new chair and vice-chair of governors have been appointed and will take up post in September 2021.
- One co-headteacher is currently on maternity leave and the deputy headteacher is acting co-headteacher.

Information about this inspection

- This was the first routine inspection since the COVID-19 pandemic began. The inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors met with senior leaders, staff, pupils and members of the governing body. They also spoke with parents.
- Inspectors did deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics and physical education. Inspectors discussed the curriculum with senior leaders, subject leaders, staff and pupils. They visited lessons, looked at pupils' work and listened to pupils read.

- To inspect safeguarding, leaders viewed the school’s website and policies, met with the designated safeguarding lead and reviewed a sample of safeguarding records. Inspectors spoke with pupils and staff. They scrutinised the single central register which records the safeguarding checks carried out on adults working at the school.
- Inspectors also reviewed documentation, including leaders’ plan for improvement, minutes from governing body meetings, curriculum plans and behaviour logs.

Inspection team

Alice Roberts, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Lea Hannam

Ofsted Inspector

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