

Inspection of a good school: Whitelands Park Primary School

Sagecroft Road, Thatcham, Berkshire RG18 3FH

Inspection dates: 13 to 14 July 2021

Outcome

Whitelands Park 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?

Whitelands Park Primary is a friendly school where pupils feel safe and well cared for. There are warm and respectful relationships between pupils and staff.

Pupils behave very well. They understand the school's rules and follow these well. Playtimes are harmonious. Incidents of poor behaviour and bullying are rare. If there are any issues, pupils are confident that staff will sort things out quickly.

Leaders are determined that pupils broaden their horizons. There is an extensive range of activities on offer. For instance, pupils enjoy the school's 'university days' where they can learn about photography, garden design or roller skating. Pupils learn to play musical instruments such as the double bass or clarinet. They perform proudly in the school's orchestra. Pupils enjoy cookery, with notable success in a local 'Masterchef' competition.

Despite the many opportunities offered, leaders' expectations for what pupils can do and achieve need to be higher. Pupils do not always remember their learning because leaders have not identified precisely what they want pupils to know in some subjects. In reading, younger pupils are not supported effectively. Pupils' reading experiences, more widely across the school, are limited.

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

All pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), study a broad range of subjects. Leaders have recently introduced a new curriculum in subjects other than English and mathematics. The planning and implementation of subjects such as history and geography are at an early stage. Leaders have not yet identified the important knowledge that they want pupils to know and remember from early years to Year 6. This means that pupils' knowledge is not building over time.

Classrooms, particularly in the older years, are calm and purposeful. Pupils listen carefully to their teachers. However, teachers' expectations for what pupils can achieve are not high enough. Pupils do not always take enough care about the work they do in their books. They complete activities in some subjects, such as history, which do not help them make links in their work. This means that pupils have limited knowledge and opportunities to develop their skills in the curriculum they study.

Leaders' approach to early reading and English is not having the intended impact. Leaders have not made sure that all staff are trained to deliver a single, agreed phonics programme. Pupils who are at an early stage of learning to read are provided with books that do not always help them practise the sounds they are taught. This means that some pupils miss out on the opportunity to develop fluency in their reading. The different strategies in place are not supporting the weakest readers effectively to catch up. In English and across the curriculum, there are few opportunities for pupils to read high-quality texts or find out about different authors. Consequently, pupils do not have a deep love of reading.

Leaders have made sure that the curriculum in mathematics is well sequenced. However, in some lessons, the work that teachers plan and provide for pupils is too easy. Pupils do not always practise or apply their mathematical knowledge in the concepts taught. As a result, this inhibits their learning.

Pupils with SEND are increasingly being provided with the support they need to learn well. Staff have received training to help them make necessary adaptations for pupils. However, along with other pupils, pupils with SEND are not learning the curriculum well enough in some subjects because of the improvements needed.

Leaders are rightly proud of the breadth of experiences and opportunities offered. Pupils take part in a comprehensive range of clubs and sporting activities such as netball, golf and archery. Pupils sing with great expression and gusto in their music lessons. They aspire to audition successfully for a place in the popular 'performance choir'. Leaders ensure that pupils have a variety of memorable experiences, such as working with the London Symphony Orchestra and visiting places of interest.

Pupils show a mature understanding of each other's differences and the importance of acceptance and kindness. All this helps pupils to have a respectful view of the world and prepares them well for the next stage of their education. One pupil said, 'We always treat others like we would like to be treated.'

Governance is strengthening. The planned restructure is intended to enable governors to hold leaders to account more effectively for the quality of education. The trust has provided helpful coaching to staff and leaders. Staff work closely together and support each other well. They are reflective and thoughtful about their work and keen to improve. They appreciate the changes leaders have made to reduce their workload.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders ensure that staff are well trained, so they know how to keep pupils safe. Staff quickly report anything they may be worried about, which leaders follow up promptly. Leaders work well with external agencies to make sure that pupils and their families receive the support they need. Leaders are alert to the risks in the local area and are mindful of these when dealing with concerns.

Pupils know how to keep safe online. They take part in a range of activities to develop their understanding of how to stay safe both in and out of school, for instance learning how to ride a bike safely on the road.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Some subjects in the wider curriculum, such as history, are not coherently planned and sequenced. It is clear from leaders' actions that they are in the process of bringing this about. Leaders should ensure that they identify and sequence the important knowledge that pupils need to know and remember in these subjects from early years to Year 6.
- There are inconsistencies in how phonics is taught. Leaders should implement and follow a systematic phonics programme. All staff need to be well trained in how to teach the school's chosen programme. Leaders should check that staff are following the programme as it is intended.
- Pupils in the early stages of reading are given reading books which are not always linked to the sounds they have learned. Consequently, they do not get to practise their phonics knowledge. Leaders must ensure that the books pupils read are matched to the sounds they have learned.
- Many pupils do not read widely or for enjoyment. In English lessons and across the curriculum, staff should provide opportunities for pupils to read high-quality books and listen to stories. This is so that pupils can develop a better knowledge of authors, widen their vocabulary and develop a love of reading.
- Expectations of what pupils can achieve are not high enough. Leaders should ensure that teachers set the highest expectations in all subjects. This is so that all pupils, including those with SEND, are given work that is demanding and enables them to learn the curriculum well.

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 1 to 2 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	140407
Local authority	West Berkshire
Inspection number	10201306
Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	353
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Michael Cole
Headteacher	Matthew Irving
Website	www.whitelandsparkprimary.co.uk/
Date of previous inspection	1 to\ 2 December 2016, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- Whitelands Park Primary School is an academy, sponsored by Kennet Schools Academies Trust (KSAT). Another local primary school joined the trust in September 2019.

Information about this inspection

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 (coronavirus) 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 met with senior leaders, staff and pupils.
- Inspectors held meetings with the chief executive officer and two directors of KSAT.
- Inspectors met with four governors, including the chair of governors.
- Inspectors reviewed the school's safeguarding arrangements. They looked at relevant documentation and staff recruitment checks, as well as scrutinising the school's systems to keep pupils safe.

- Inspectors took account of the 19 responses to the Ofsted's Parent View survey and 19 free texts. Inspectors also considered 45 replies to the confidential staff survey.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: reading, mathematics and history. They spoke to senior leaders, subject leaders and class teachers about how these subjects are planned and delivered. They also looked at curriculum planning for music. Inspectors visited lessons, talked to pupils about what they had learned and looked at their work. Inspectors also listened to pupils read.

Inspection team

Frances Nation, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

James Broadbridge

Her Majesty's Inspector

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