

Inspection of a good school: John F Kennedy Primary School

Station Road, Columbia, Washington, Tyne and Wear NE38 7AR

Inspection dates:

14 and 15 September 2021

Outcome

John F Kennedy Primary School continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

John F Kennedy Primary School is a happy place to learn and make new friends. Pupils speak highly of the care and kindness teachers and other adults show them. Pupils say they feel safe. They appreciate the opportunities they have to learn about cyber bullying and road safety.

Staff want the best for all pupils. During their time at school, pupils achieve well, including in reading. However, more can be done to support the youngest readers. Leaders are passionate about helping to develop pupils' reading, wider interests and skills. Initiatives and activities, such as forest school, music clubs and peripatetic tuition, excite pupils and are prominent features of the school.

During the inspection, pupils were attentive in class and eager to contribute to discussions and activities. At playtime, pupils take every opportunity to let off steam by playing football or 'tig'. While not seen during the inspection, some pupils say playtime activities can get a little out-of-hand and lessons are not always as calm and focused as they were during the inspection.

The newly opened additional resource provision for pupils with autism spectrum disorder, The Treehouse, is helping pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) integrate into lessons and achieve strong individual outcomes.

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

Leaders at the school and trust continue to review the school's curriculum. Recently, leaders have introduced more structured curriculum plans across the curriculum, including in mathematics. Pupils now learn subject content that closely matches the aims and objectives of the national curriculum. In mathematics, teachers regularly emphasise to pupils challenging subject vocabulary. Resources, assessment and questioning are used by teachers to good effect. This helps them understand which pupils need extra support in class.

It is early days with regard to the development of some curriculum plans, including in foundation subjects such as history. Here, curriculum plans identify some knowledge which pupils need to learn at each stage. However, these plans do not consider how pupils will build their knowledge and understanding of complex ideas and concepts over time.

Staff attend phonics training led by the trust. This is helping to ensure the vast majority of pupils learn to read swiftly. Some staff access bespoke support to develop their understanding of how pupils learn to segment and blend sounds. Leaders intend to change the way pupils learn to read soon. This is because, at times, staff teach phonics in different ways or tell pupils to guess words rather than using the phonics skills they have been taught. In key stage 1, the books pupils read are not always closely matched to their phonics knowledge. In this way, the teaching of phonics is not as strong as it could be.

Staff morale is high. Teachers and support staff say leaders are approachable and have a strong moral compass. Leaders appreciate that working in education can be stressful. They have introduced a range of strategies to reduce staff workload across the school. Strategies include staggered marking and the use of an assessment planner. Staff appreciate the flexibility of leaders who afford them opportunities to attend family medical appointments and events if necessary. Staff say this is an example of how leaders work closely with them to create a strong team ethos leading to a positive working environment.

Leaders and trustees opened The Treehouse in January 2021. Currently, there are 10 pupils with SEND attending across all key stages and in the early years. Pupils with a placement in The Treehouse regularly and successfully participate in lessons with their friends in the main part of the school. This is possible because the staff in The Treehouse are knowledgeable and passionate about supporting pupils with SEND. All teachers have received SEND training, which allows them to plan lessons to meet the needs of pupils with SEND. Staff in The Treehouse have a strong understanding of the learning and pastoral needs of pupils with autism spectrum disorder.

Pupils have many opportunities to learn about issues relating to friendships, bullying, healthy eating and religion. Teachers frequently encourage discussion in class. Pupils are particularly confident when sharing their thoughts and opinions. Prior to the restrictions linked to the pandemic, pupils often participated in the school orchestra, which included talented musicians belonging to the strings, brass and woodwind sections.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Systems to check and verify the suitability of staff are thorough. Staff and governors who are involved in appointing adults receive safer recruitment training.

Pupils and staff take bullying seriously. Pupils say they would report any bullying to staff swiftly and that staff would deal with any issues robustly. Inspection evidence demonstrates that there is very little bullying at the school.

Staff have an appropriate understanding of what to do should a pupil make a disclosure to them. Pupils say they feel safe. They describe a family feel to the school; one where staff and pupils all look out for each other.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Reading outcomes are strong. However, the school's current approach to teaching phonics does not always follow a systematic synthetic approach. Teachers do not consistently teach phonics in the same way. Some pupils read books using strategies that are not helpful for their reading development. Leaders should identify and introduce a validated phonics scheme and ensure that all staff receive appropriate early reading training. Leaders should also ensure that the resources and books pupils are given match their stage of phonics development.
- Leaders continue to review the school's curriculum. Some subjects are further ahead than others and have appropriately sequenced plans. In the foundation subjects, including history, the school's curriculum is not yet sufficiently well planned and sequenced. Pupils do not build their knowledge and understanding of complex ideas and concepts over time as well as they might. However, it is clear that leaders have already taken action to plan next year's curriculum and to train staff in how to deliver it. For this reason, the transitional arrangements have been applied.
- The perceptions of a small proportion of pupils relating to behaviour in class and during social times differ to that of leaders. However, inspection evidence highlighted pupils' positive attitudes to learning and play. Leaders should seek to understand more clearly the conflicting opinions that relate to behaviour and ensure that any low-level disruption in class or misbehaviour at playtime is eradicated.

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 evidence that a school would now receive a higher or lower grade, 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 deem the section 8 inspection as a section 5 inspection immediately.

This is the first section 8 inspection since we judged the predecessor school, John F Kennedy Primary School, to be good in November 2012.

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 information from Ofsted Parent View 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	144223
Local authority	Sunderland
Inspection number	10200601
Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	425
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Thomas Lillie
Executive Headteacher	Ailsa Taylor
Website	www.jfkprimary.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- John F Kennedy Primary School converted to become an academy school in April 2017. When its predecessor school was last inspected by Ofsted, it was judged to be good overall.
- The school has additionally resourced provision for 16 pupils with autism spectrum disorder. Currently, 10 pupils attend this provision known as The Treehouse.
- The school is larger than the average-sized primary school.
- The proportion of pupils with SEND is above average.
- A new head of school took up post in September 2021.
- Most pupils attending the school are White British.
- The school is part of the Oak Learning Trust multi-academy trust with one other primary school locally.

Information about this inspection

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 (coronavirus) pandemic began. The inspector discussed the impact of the pandemic with school leaders and took that into account in his evaluation.

- The inspector undertook deep dives into the following subjects: Reading, mathematics and history. For each deep dive, the inspector met with subject leaders, looked at curriculum plans, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Meetings were held with senior and curriculum leaders, teachers, trustees, governors support staff and the school improvement adviser.
- The inspector held informal and formal discussions with pupils and observed interactions during social times.
- The inspector reviewed the school's records of staff recruitment.
- The inspector observed the work of the school and scrutinised a wide range of evidence, including behaviour and admissions records, safeguarding files, recruitment checks and curriculum documentation.
- The inspector took into account the 28 responses from parents who completed Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire. Twenty members of staff and 76 pupils completed Ofsted's online staff's and pupils' surveys. All of these responses were taken into consideration.

Inspection team

Lee Elliott, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

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