

Inspection of Busbridge Infant School

Hambledon Road, Busbridge, Godalming, Surrey GU7 1PJ

Inspection dates: 6 and 7 October 2021

Overall effectiveness

Inadequate

The quality of education

Requires improvement

Behaviour and attitudes

Good

Personal development

Requires improvement

Leadership and management

Inadequate

Early years provision

Requires improvement

Previous inspection grade

Outstanding

This school was last inspected 14 years ago and judged 'Outstanding' under a previous inspection framework. This reflected the school's overall effectiveness under the inspection framework in use at the time.

From then until November 2020, the school was exempted by law from routine inspection, so there has been a longer gap than usual between inspections. Judgements in this report are based on the current inspection framework and also reflect changes that may have happened at any point since the last inspection.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are bright, lively and eager to please. They are enthusiastic in lessons and love playing together in the beautiful school grounds and woodland. Pupils are confident about talking to trusted adults if they are worried. The school helps pupils to be kind and look after each other. Staff help pupils with making and keeping friends. In this way, worries about bullying are quickly dealt with. However, leaders and staff have not carried out their safeguarding duties effectively. The school's systems for recording and sharing concerns about child protection are weak and potentially put pupils at risk.

For a long time, expectations of what pupils learn have not been high enough. The school has not added enough value to what pupils already know, understand and can do. Because pupils achieve well in mathematics, reading and writing, it has been assumed that they are learning an ambitious curriculum. They are not. Not enough is new to pupils and topics are not planned well enough in subjects across the curriculum to help pupils to remember important knowledge.

Many parents feel lucky that their children attend a school in such an attractive setting. However, parents are not aware that the school's quality of education needs to be better.

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

The teaching of reading is inconsistent. Staff do not have enough expertise in how to teach phonics. Leaders are using three different phonics schemes, which is confusing for adults and pupils. Pupils' reading books do not always help them to practise the sounds they know.

Books chosen for class reading are not inspiring enough. They do not introduce pupils to a rich and ambitious vocabulary. Sometimes books are selected because they fit in with a topic rather than for their own intrinsic worth as compelling children's literature.

Staff do not think deeply enough about exactly what they want pupils to learn. Some topics are taught just because 'this is the way it has always been'. Teachers are not always clear about the crucial content that pupils need to learn in the early years, or in science and the foundation subjects in Years 1 and 2. Adults supporting children in the early years do not make the most of their interactions with children to build up their knowledge and skills, especially when children are learning outdoors.

Teachers' planning for mathematics is more ambitious. Pupils respond well to their teachers' higher expectations and remember what they have learned. However, teachers and leaders have not made sure that the mathematical learning in the early years leads on to what they learn in Years 1 and 2.

Nevertheless, pupils definitely have a positive attitude to learning. Even the youngest children try hard with tasks and are proud of showing what they have produced. Pupils' written work is neat and conscientious, notably in their carefully composed sentences and paragraphs. Sometimes a few pupils become restless, but only when they have had to wait too long to get started on a task. Children in the early years settle in well to the routines of the Reception class. They learn to be responsible and independent as positive preparation for Year 1.

Staff get to know children in the early years quickly. They rapidly identify and respond to pupils' changing needs as they move up through the school. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities are encouraged to learn all that their peers do, with minimal intervention needed. When particular support is necessary, effective group or one-to-one guidance is swiftly organised.

School leaders have not planned enough opportunities to promote pupils' personal development. Pupils are able to attend a range of clubs and some trips have been safely organised despite the COVID-19 pandemic. However, pupils have few opportunities to look beyond the school and learn about lives that are different from their own. The school is proud of its values but not all pupils really understand what they mean. A recently revised personal, social and health education programme is helping to enhance the overall provision for pupils' sense of self, resilience and well-being.

The new headteacher has sensibly strengthened the school's senior leadership team in order to share out the workload and develop the curriculum. Staff are wholly supportive of the headteacher and have bought into his plans to improve the school.

Governors are committed to the school. They frequently seek the views of parents and are good listeners to staff. They have felt reassured by external reviews of the school's performance and safeguarding arrangements. However, they know that they need to balance the support they give with more challenge, in order to identify weaknesses more incisively.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are not effective.

Leaders have not ensured that staff's safeguarding training is up to date. Staff do not understand the importance of noting and referring on concerns about pupils in their care. Information about individual pupils' welfare is not always recorded in enough detail. Records about the most vulnerable pupils have not been maintained in good order. Communications with other agencies who protect children do not record clearly what information has been shared, when or with whom.

When it was identified during the inspection that some individual records were incomplete, the headteacher took prompt action to follow up concerns with the appropriate professionals.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The school's procedures for sharing information about safeguarding are not fit for purpose. Information about pupils' welfare and communications with other professionals have not been noted accurately or in enough detail. The school's child protection files are disorganised and some information is missing. Leaders and governors must urgently review and improve arrangements for noting, reporting, referring, storing and sharing information about pupils' welfare and safety.
- Staff do not all understand their safeguarding duties, including the importance of noting and passing on concerns. Leaders must ensure that all staff fully understand their statutory responsibilities and that they deepen their understanding of potential risk of harm to pupils.
- Until recently, the teaching of reading has not been the top priority in the school. The use of different phonics programmes leads to inconsistent approaches and staff have not had enough training to teach early reading effectively. Leaders must ensure that staff are trained in an appropriate phonics programme and that books for pupils' own practice are actually matched to the sounds they are learning.
- Pupils' reading diet in English lessons is constrained by the limitations of the topic-led curriculum. Pupils do not have enough rich experiences of high-quality literature. Leaders and teachers need to ensure that the overall programme for reading, including in the early years, is determined by more demanding fiction and non-fiction texts.
- The curriculum for science and the foundation subjects is not ambitious and does not include enough subject-specific content. In the early years and key stage 1, topics chosen for pupils to study do not prioritise the knowledge pupils need to progress to the next stage of their education. Leaders need to make sure that curriculum planning is based on an ambitious selection of specific subject content pupils need to learn.
- Staff and leaders have not done enough to promote pupils' personal development. The school does not place enough emphasis on promoting pupils' understanding of British values and the wider world beyond the school. Leaders should ensure that pupils understand the school's values and that they have more opportunities to develop spiritually and culturally.
- Governors knew that aspects of the school needed to improve but had not identified the real scale of the weaknesses, including the safeguarding failings. Governors must ensure that they get to know more about the curriculum and the school's safeguarding procedures and that they increase the level of challenge in their questions for senior leaders.

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	125099
Local authority	Surrey
Inspection number	10199384
Type of school	Infant
School category	Foundation
Age range of pupils	4 to 7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	180
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Joanna Thomas
Headteacher	Darren Heatley
Website	www.busbridge-infant.surrey.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	12 March 2007, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The current headteacher took up his post in September 2021.
- The school is part of the Godalming Learning Partnership, which is a federation of 15 secondary, primary, infant and junior schools.
- The school does not currently use any alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

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

In accordance with section 44(2) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires significant improvement, because it is performing significantly less well than it might in all the circumstances reasonably be expected to perform.

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with school leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation.

- Inspectors met with the headteacher, senior leaders and staff. They also met with governors and spoke to the director of school improvement for Surrey local authority.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in the following subjects: early reading, geography, mathematics and science. For each deep dive, inspectors spoke to subject leaders and teachers, looked at curriculum plans, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of work. An inspector observed pupils reading to a familiar adult.
- Inspectors spoke to pupils informally in and out of lessons. An inspector also met with pupils to tour the school and talk about their personal development.
- Inspectors discussed safeguarding arrangements in the school, reviewed records of concerns and met with the headteacher and home-school link worker. Inspectors also spoke to staff about what they do if they have a concern about a pupil.
- Inspectors spoke to a number of parents at the beginning and end of the school day. They also took into consideration 144 responses to Ofsted Parent View and over 100 free-text comments.
- Inspectors considered 21 responses to the staff survey.
- Inspectors reviewed the school's development plan, minutes of governors' meetings and a range of documentation relating to curriculum planning.

Inspection team

Janet Pearce, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Linda Appleby

Ofsted Inspector

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