

Inspection of a good school: Cowley Hill School

Winstre Road, Borehamwood, Hertfordshire WD6 5DP

Inspection dates:

5 and 6 October 2021

Outcome

Cowley Hill School continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are well cared for at this welcoming school. Attendance is high. Pupils have a notable range of extra-curricular opportunities. They enjoy a wide variety of lunchtime and after-school clubs, including choir, sketching, French and football, which enhance their learning experience and build relationships. This is a strength of the school.

Pupils behave well in class and around the school. Pupils understand what bullying is and say it rarely happens. Parents who responded to the online survey, Ofsted Parent View, agree that bullying rarely happens and that issues are dealt with. Pupils know who to speak with if they are worried or concerned. They are confident that adults will listen to them.

Pupils have good relationships with each other and with adults. They speak sensitively and kindly about each other. Pupils understand about different religions and beliefs. They celebrate cultural events such as Black History Month.

Parents are positive about the school. During the national lockdowns, pupils and their parents appreciated the school's care and the thorough and accessible remote curriculum offer.

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

Leaders have designed the curriculum with care and attention to detail. They have identified the key skills, knowledge and outcomes expected for each year group. This ensures pupils build their knowledge over time in a well-considered order. Pupils present their work well across the curriculum. Teachers help pupils understand what they need to do to improve their work.

Curriculum leaders are knowledgeable, reflective and proactive. They are keen to improve the quality of education in their curriculum areas. Senior leaders make sure curriculum leaders have opportunities to check how well teachers adapt teaching to meet the needs

of pupils. Curriculum plans are now focused on ensuring teaching practice is consistent across all subjects.

Leaders check pupils' starting points and how well pupils learn and remember more over time. However, teachers do not check pupils' learning as well as they should during lessons. This results in a few pupils not getting the level of challenge which would help further develop their understanding.

Pupils are taught to read carefully and well. They learn the sounds that letters make from the point of starting school in early years. Staff are mostly precise and accurate when teaching this to pupils. Most pupils learn to read fluently and well.

The curriculum is broad and interesting. In assemblies, pupils sing with both skill and joy. Leaders promote pupils' wider knowledge in a variety of ways to help them understand British Values.

The needs of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are identified at an early stage. Staff usually make appropriate adaptations to the curriculum to meet the needs of pupils with SEND. Pupils in the specialist resource base have their speech and language needs met well and experience a broad curriculum. These pupils are particularly well supported by staff. Staff know pupils individually and are well trained to deliver the requirements outlined in education, health and care plans. The routine and consistent focus on English and mathematics in the base allow pupils to return to mainstream classes regularly.

The early years includes both Nursery and Reception classes. Children have settled well into the expectations and routines of learning. They receive daily teaching in early reading and mathematics, as well as all the other areas of the early years curriculum. Children learn in a well-ordered environment. They enjoy learning to correctly form their letters and explaining what they are learning.

There are daily breakfast and after-school clubs run by the school. Pupils benefit from healthy food and interesting activities. They build positive relationships in these clubs.

Governors support and challenge school leaders appropriately. Many governors have been attached to the school for a long time. They know and understand the community well. They have a secure understanding of the school's strengths and areas to improve. Governors bring a range of appropriate skills and experiences. They undertake regular training to keep them up to date. Leaders take account of staff workload and well-being.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders promote a strong culture of safeguarding. Pupils know who to talk to should they have concerns. Leaders have identified pupils and families who need help and support. They check this support often to ensure it helps and is in the best interests of pupils.

Leaders work effectively with other specialist agencies when needed. The school's recruitment records meet statutory requirements, including staff files and checks. Regular training ensures that staff are up to date with the most recent child protection guidance. Children are taught about different risks, such as those online.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Teachers do not consistently check how well pupils understand and remember what they have been taught during lessons. This means that where pupils have misconceptions, misunderstand, or find work too easy, this sometimes goes unnoticed. Pupils then do not learn as much as they could. Leaders need to ensure that teachers consistently use accurate assessment to make sure that all pupils can learn and achieve as much as possible.

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 deem the section 8 inspection as a section 5 inspection immediately.

This is the second section 8 inspection since we judged Cowley Hill Primary school to be good in July 2011.

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	117099
Local authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	10199935
Type of school	Primary
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	433
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Jacqueline Spriggs
Headteacher	Jon Hood
Website	www.cowleyhill.herts.sch.uk/
Date of previous inspection	12 July 2016, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- This is a primary school with a nursery. There is a specialist resource provision attached to the school with a speech and language specialism. The school operates its own breakfast and after-school clubs each day.

Information about this inspection

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. The inspector discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school leaders, and has taken that into account in their evaluation.
- The inspector carried out deep dives in reading, mathematics and history. This included visits to classes and the early years. The inspector spoke with leaders, pupils, teachers, support staff and teaching assistants. She met with the chair of the governing body and two governors. The inspector considered the work in pupils' books and curriculum planning.

- Ofsted survey results from parents, pupils and staff were considered. The inspector met with the local authority school improvement adviser attached to the school and considered her reports.
- Safeguarding records were considered. The inspector met with the special educational needs coordinator to discuss SEND provision and practice.
- Regular meetings were held with the headteacher and deputy headteacher to discuss and scrutinise school policies and procedures. The inspector visited both the breakfast and after-school clubs.

Inspection team

Jacqueline Bell-Cook, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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