

Inspection of a good school: Purwell Primary School

Fairfield Way, Hitchin, Hertfordshire, SG4 0PU

Inspection dates:

28 and 29 September 2021

Outcome

Purwell Primary School continues to be a good school.

There has been no change to this school's overall judgement of good as a result of this initial (section 8) inspection. However, the evidence gathered suggests that the inspection grade might not be as high if a full inspection were carried out now. The next inspection will therefore be a full (section 5) inspection.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils enjoy school and feel well cared for. They enjoy the community environment, where staff know them and their families well. Pupils are happy and enthusiastic about learning. Pupils learn a broad range of subjects. Pupils particularly enjoy subjects such as geography, where they learn about their place in the world. There are opportunities for pupils to develop physically and participate in sporting events. Pupils learn strategies to support their mental health and well-being.

In lessons pupils listen carefully and are keen to share their ideas. Pupils are polite and are respectful towards one another and towards adults. Cases of bullying are rare. Younger pupils are not always clear about the difference between poor behaviour and bullying.

Parents' views of the school are mixed. Some parents are very positive about the quality of education which their children receive, while others say their children do not receive the support or challenge they need to achieve well. Most parents appreciated the care for families and the home-learning provided during the pandemic.

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

Leaders have designed a curriculum and have plans in place that cover all the subjects which pupils study. However, leaders have not given enough thought as to how teachers are to adapt these plans to take account of pupils' different starting points. Teachers are not checking well enough what pupils know and remember from previous learning. They are not using the information they have to change the curriculum plans to ensure that all

pupils do well. Sometimes work is too easy for many pupils, including children in the early years.

Subject leaders in English, mathematics and geography demonstrate strong subject knowledge. Leaders are not, however, ensuring that the curriculum is taught consistently well across the school. Teaching does not reflect fully the school's intentions for the curriculum.

Plans are in place for pupils to learn to read, but a few pupils are not learning to read as quickly as they should. Younger pupils often need additional support to gain the skills and knowledge they need to become fluent readers. In the early years all children are expected to focus on the same sounds, regardless of what they already know and can do. This results in lack of progress for some by the time they start in Year 1. There is a large team of support staff who work supportively with groups and individual pupils in key stage 1. They do not always have the skills or training needed, particularly in the teaching of phonics. Adults' modelling of sounds is not always accurate.

Teachers are not making sure that younger pupils learn the basics of letter formation, handwriting and spelling. This is having an impact on pupils when they reach key stage 2. Teachers have to spend more time helping some pupils to catch up and revisit learning that should already be secure.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are supported well. The recently appointed special educational needs coordinator (SENCo) is proactive in assessing pupils' needs and developing provision and support within classrooms. Pupils are starting to benefit from more precise adult support and adjusted activities which allow them to access the curriculum. Some staff require further training to better support pupils with SEND.

Personal development is given a high priority at the school. Pupils can attend clubs such as gymnastics and cheerleading. Other activities are in the process of restarting, such as gardening. Leaders promote awareness of diversity and difference.

Behaviour in lessons is generally good. Pupils are respectful towards their peers and to adults. Where there is restlessness, this is more often linked to a mismatch between what pupils know and the expectation and quality of work set for them.

Governors support school leaders and have a clear understanding of the strengths and areas that require further development. They have a suitable range of skills and abilities. Leaders recognise that improved communication with parents and carers is still needed.

The early years curriculum plans provide for the different areas of learning. Staff support children and provide for their physical and emotional needs well. Some children are ready for further challenge in their learning activities. When they are planning learning, teachers do not take enough account of what children already know and can do.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

There is a culture of safeguarding at the school. Staff and governors receive regular training. Staff are clear about the procedures for reporting concerns. Pupils know who to speak to should they have any concerns and understand how to keep themselves safe. They learn about this in assemblies and lessons. Leaders promptly identify those pupils and families requiring early help. They are tenacious in securing the support that families need.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Teachers do not use pupils' starting points to plan and adapt the curriculum to meet all pupils' needs to ensure all pupils are appropriately challenged. This means that some pupils do not make the progress they could. Leaders should ensure that teachers make better use of assessment to establish pupils' starting points and plan to ensure pupils achieve well across the curriculum.
- Reading is not taught systematically across all year groups and adults are not as skilled as they should be in the teaching of phonics and early reading. This results in weaker readers struggling to gain fluency in reading and spelling and impacts on their writing in other subjects. Leaders should ensure there is a clear, consistent approach for the teaching of reading, including phonics. They should ensure all staff are appropriately trained to deliver this well.
- Basic skills such as handwriting, letter formation and spelling are not developed systematically nor expected in pieces of work from the start. This results in teachers in key stage 2 having to reteach these early expectations before moving on. This has a particular impact on pupils with lower starting points. Leaders should ensure that there is a consistent approach to teaching of these basic skills in all subjects from the early years onwards.

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 second section 8 inspection since we judged Purwell Primary School to be good in September 2010.

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

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| Unique reference number | 117224 |
| Local authority | Hertfordshire |
| Inspection number | 10193988 |
| Type of school | Primary |
| School category | Maintained |
| Age range of pupils | 3 to 11 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number of pupils on the school roll | 188 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Acting Chair of governing body | Matthew Hillman |
| Headteacher | Richard Cano |
| Website | http://www.purwell.herts.sch.uk |
| Date of previous inspection | 21 June 2016, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 |

Information about this school

- There have been no relevant changes since the last inspection.

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 school leaders and has taken that into account in her evaluation.
- The inspector spoke with the headteacher, assistant headteacher, subject leaders, a group of support and teaching and office staff, pupils, parents and carers, the chair of the governing body, the local authority school improvement partner and the SENCo.
- The inspector carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading and phonics, mathematics, and geography. For each deep dive the inspector met with subject leaders, looked at curriculum plans, visited a sample of lessons with subject leaders, spoke to teachers, spoke with pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Safeguarding records were scrutinised by the inspector, including staff files, the single central record of pre-employment checks, and the school's log of safeguarding

incidents. Parents', pupils', staff, and governors' views about safeguarding were considered. A meeting was held with the designated safeguarding leader.

- The results of 62 responses to the Ofsted Parent View online questionnaire, including free-text comments, were considered by the inspector. Fifteen responses to the staff questionnaire were also considered.

Inspection team

Jacqueline Bell-Cook, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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