

Inspection of Whitley Park Primary and Nursery School

Brixham Road, Reading, Berkshire RG2 7RB

Inspection dates: 7 and 8 December 2021

Overall effectiveness	Good
The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Good
Early years provision	Good
Previous inspection grade	Requires improvement

What is it like to attend this school?

Leaders' and governors' high expectations and a committed staff team have transformed this school since the last inspection. Pupils speak fondly of life at Whitley Park Primary, the adults who work there and the many friendships they have. They love many aspects of school life, such as the choir, the link with Reading Football Club and reading to Buzz, the school therapy dog.

Leaders encourage pupils to aspire to be their best. The school's values support pupils to believe that they all can achieve. 'I will, I can, I am' shines brightly from a lightbox in the headteacher's room, radiating through the whole school.

Pupils try hard in lessons. They listen and want to learn. Pupils adore going to the headteacher for a hot chocolate treat as a reward for showing a good attitude to learning.

Staff support pupils to behave well. Pupils know they can trust staff to help resolve any issues quickly. They talk confidently about the differences between bullying and disagreements. When a rare case of bullying happens, leaders are quick to deal with it and take it seriously. As a result, pupils are happy and feel safe.

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

Staff teach phonics skilfully. They closely follow the agreed programme. This helps children in Reception to quickly learn the sounds that letters make. Children use this knowledge well to read words and swiftly become fluent and proficient readers. Leaders use assessment effectively to identify and then support children who need more help.

Leaders have designed an ambitious reading curriculum. Teachers develop pupils' comprehension skills well. There is a sharp focus on fluency in lessons. Consequently, pupils read with accuracy and confidence. Teachers read aloud a range of books to pupils. This helps pupils develop a strong love of reading.

There is an aspirational and well-planned curriculum in place for all other subjects. Pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), learn these subjects well. In some subjects, such as art, science and geography, pupils learn exceptionally well. For example, in a mixed Year 3 and 4 class, pupils spoke confidently about tectonic plate boundaries and their role in earthquakes and volcanoes. They can use what they have already learned and apply this to different situations. Leaders know that pupils' learning in some subjects is stronger than others. This is because some subject leaders have greater expertise. Where this is the case, they support teachers to deliver the curriculum in a way that helps pupils to know and remember more.

Leaders prioritise pupils' oracy skills throughout subjects. They make sure that pupils learn how to talk and use spoken language skills well. This starts with a sharp focus

on communication and language in early years. For example, in the Nursery, children were able to recite the story of 'The Gingerbread Man' while playing with characters from the story. Pupils across the school can talk about their ideas and join in with discussions adeptly. This deepens their understanding.

Teachers check pupils have retained learning effectively. Leaders make sure that staff quickly identify the needs of pupils with SEND. Staff make well-considered changes to their teaching to help these pupils to access the same curriculum and to learn well. Recent staff absence has caused some parents to be slightly anxious about the support their children are receiving. Leaders have increased the special needs team from early next year to resolve this.

The personal, social and health education curriculum helps pupils to learn about themselves and the wider world. Pupils say that assemblies also teach them to treat others kindly. They understand the importance of celebrating diversity and showing respect for all. Pupils learn about healthy relationships and lifestyles. For example, pupils in Year 2 know about the importance of sleep so that their 'body will be ready for the day'.

Governors challenge and support leaders well. They understand the many strengths of the school and the challenges that leaders are currently facing. A high rate of absence for some pupils, partly due to the pandemic, is one of these challenges. Leaders want pupils in school so they can learn. They use a wide range of strategies to improve attendance, including phone calls and home visits.

There have been many changes at Whitley Park. Leaders make decisions that benefit pupils but are mindful of staff well-being too. As one member of staff said, 'Our headteacher really looks after his staff.'

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Safeguarding children is central to all aspects of leaders' work. Staff are well trained, so they know what concerns or changes to be alert to. They know the pupils and their families well.

The safeguarding team meets weekly to discuss pupils' well-being and welfare. Leaders keep detailed records of any concerns, incidents and actions. They are tenacious in getting the right support for pupils, disagreeing with external agencies if required.

Governors have a sharp eye on making sure safeguarding is effective. They speak to pupils to check their understanding. Governors ensure that the procedures to recruit and appoint staff are thorough.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In a few cases, subject leaders have not got the expertise to support teachers to deliver the curriculum consistently well. This means that how well pupils remember what they have learned is varied across subjects. Leaders should ensure that the curriculum is implemented securely and consistently in every subject so that pupils, including those with SEND, achieve exceptionally well in all subjects.
- Some pupils do not attend school regularly enough. This has been made worse by the pandemic. As a result, some pupils are not learning as well as they could. Leaders should continue their work to improve attendance for all pupils, including those who are disadvantaged and pupils with SEND.

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	136512
Local authority	Reading
Inspection number	10203135
Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	576
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Cathy Woodcock
Headteacher	Nathan Butler-Broad
Website	www.whitleyparkprimaryschool.co.uk/
Date of previous inspection	11 and 12 April 2018, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The headteacher started his role in January 2021, following a term when the school was led by an interim headteacher.
- The proportions of pupils with SEND, English as an additional language and disadvantaged pupils at the school are well above the national average.
- The school currently uses one alternative provider.

Information about this inspection

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

- 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 senior leaders, staff and pupils.
- Inspectors did deep dives in these subjects: reading, mathematics, history, geography and personal, social and health education. Inspectors spoke to subject leaders, staff and pupils, visited lessons and looked at pupils' work.

- Inspectors sampled curriculum plans, looked at pupils' work and spoke to pupils about some other subjects.
- An inspector spoke to the alternative provider that the school currently uses.
- The lead inspector met with three governors, including the chair of governors, and spoke with a representative from the local authority.
- Inspectors reviewed the school's safeguarding arrangements. This included safer recruitment checks and record-keeping of concerns. Inspectors also spoke to staff, governors and pupils about safeguarding.
- Inspectors took into account responses from Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, including 19 free-text comments. In addition, inspectors looked at leaders' recent surveys from pupils, staff and parents.

Inspection team

Lea Hannam, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Simon Francis	Ofsted Inspector
Chris Parker	Ofsted Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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