

Inspection of a good school: Bernards Heath Infant and Nursery School

154 Sandridge Road, St Albans, Hertfordshire AL1 4AP

Inspection dates:

25 and 26 January 2022

Outcome

Bernards Heath Infant and Nursery School continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils say that their school is a place where they can learn and play safely. They are fully involved in activities throughout the school day. Pupils explore and discover during playtimes. Across the school, pupils manage their behaviour well and show independence in what they do.

The reliable, good behaviour of pupils shows they understand how to be part of a respectful community. They respond to routines that encourage them to be polite. Pupils understand what bullying is, but they rarely see anyone being unkind. They identify the grown-ups in school and at home who help them. Pupils are confident there is immediate help if anyone feels sad or worried.

Pupils learn strategies that help them cope with any emotional challenges they face. Pupils' feelings are cared about and considered. For example, following school closures in the pandemic, pupils were welcomed back to school with a special letter and a small soft bear.

Pupils and their individual circumstances are understood. Pupils benefit from the strong connections made between home and school. Parents and carers share wide-ranging feedback about the strengths of the school to support their children. Bernards Heath is a place where pupils are nurtured and develop their individual characters.

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

Leaders have completed the work to ensure pupils throughout the school study a broad curriculum. Leaders are ambitious for, and have high expectations of, what pupils can achieve from the moment they join Nursery. This ensures the curriculum for children in the early years prepares children for learning in Year 1.

Adults in the early years setting are skilled and attentive to the needs of young children. Children are well cared for and are encouraged in all their learning. This motivates them to do their best.

A new programme for teaching phonics is beginning to support the development of pupils' early reading well. Pupils take home books that are well matched to their current knowledge. This is contributing to pupils becoming fluent readers. There are established routines in place to help the small number of pupils at risk of falling behind with phonics. However, staff have less confidence with how to adapt the new programme and resources to maximise the impact of this support. Leaders are providing additional guidance and training to refine the targeted help teachers and support staff provide.

Across the school, pupils achieve well because of the strong specialist knowledge of teachers. Pupils have the opportunity to revisit and practise using what they have learned. However, in some areas of the curriculum, the opportunity for pupils to rehearse what they have been learning could be more explicit in leaders' curriculum thinking. Leaders have already started work to make sure curriculum intentions are refined. This is to ensure teachers carefully plan opportunities for pupils to embed key knowledge in their long-term memory, in all subjects.

Leaders are determined that pupils are nurtured and receive the support they need to achieve success. All staff are committed to this work and know pupils and their individual barriers to learning well. Staff work effectively with all pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), to access the curriculum. Pupils with SEND have individualised plans to enable them to access lessons alongside their peers. Staff who work with those with the greatest needs are systematic in their approach. This is making a positive difference to these pupils.

Well-established expectations for conduct mean that pupils behave well throughout the school. Pupils cooperate with staff and there are very few disruptions in class. On the rare occasion where this does happen, teachers respond quickly to make sure learning is not disrupted. Pupils say adults in school treat them fairly.

Pupils' wider development is embedded throughout the curriculum. Pupils benefit from exploring cultural diversity, for example through the school's recent focus on an anti-racism agenda. Pupils are taught the knowledge they need to know how to keep themselves safe, including when online. Pupils know it is important to never give up. Pupils expressed this by sharing that 'trying something tricky helps grow your brain'.

Leaders, including governors, have been critically evaluative of their own work. This has led to effective, ongoing improvements. Governors have shown dedication to consider the well-being and workload of staff in school. Leaders and staff demonstrated high levels of commitment throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. Parents say that the care and attention adults give impacts positively on the experiences of their children.

In discussion with the headteacher, the inspector agreed that early reading and the implementation of the curriculum may usefully serve as a focus for the next inspection.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders have a proactive attitude to safeguarding children. Systems in place are clear and well managed. All staff have had regular training to spot signs that a child may be at risk. Staff are not complacent. They adopt the attitude that 'it could happen here'. When concerns about a child's safety or well-being are shared by anybody, these are immediately listened to and acted upon.

All pupils, including in the early years, learn how to keep themselves safe. From the earliest stage, adults teach pupils that their bodies are precious. Pupils learn to respect personal boundaries.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The programme in place for teaching phonics is recently established. Leaders should ensure the work to further refine the systems in place to help pupils keep up with their phonics learning is completed. Leaders need to ensure that staff working with the small number of pupils who need targeted support have the necessary training and guidance to complete this work most efficiently. This will ensure all pupils make the best possible start with their phonics to keep up with their peers.
- In a small number of curriculum plans, leaders do not always make clear the most important knowledge pupils need to revisit and regularly practise. Leaders should complete the work already underway to ensure that all curriculum plans detail the key content pupils should remember and recall fluently. Leaders need to ensure that teachers provide opportunities for pupils to consolidate this knowledge throughout the curriculum.

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 the school to be good in October 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	117135
Local authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	10200192
Type of school	Infant and nursery
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	3 to 7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	308
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Penny Dent
Headteacher	Hannah Rimmer
Website	www.bernardsheath.herts.sch.uk/
Date of previous inspection	11 October 2016, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- There is a before- and after-school childcare provision on the school site, which is managed by the governing body.
- The school does not use alternative provision.

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 leaders and has taken that into account in her evaluation of the school.
- The inspector held meetings with the headteacher, the deputy headteacher, the assistant headteacher and the special educational needs coordinator. A meeting was also held with the school improvement partner from the local authority.
- The inspector met with the full governing body, including the chair of governors.
- The inspector carried out deep dives in three subjects: early reading, mathematics and geography. For each deep dive, the inspector met with subject leaders, looked at

curriculum plans, visited a sample of lessons, spoke with teachers, spoke with pupils about their learning and, where relevant, looked at samples of pupils' work.

- The inspector met with the designated safeguarding lead, the administration assistant to the leadership team, and other staff to discuss safeguarding.
- The inspector scrutinised a range of documentation during the inspection, including curriculum plans, school development plans and safeguarding and behaviour records.
- The inspector considered 164 responses to the online survey, Ofsted Parent View, and 163 free-text comments. She also considered 31 responses to Ofsted's staff survey.
- The inspector spoke with parents at the start of the school day.
- The inspector also spoke with groups of pupils about their experiences of school life and their learning in lessons to understand what it is like to be a pupil in their school. The inspector also observed the behaviour of pupils across the school site.

Inspection team

Kristian Hewitt, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

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