

Inspection of a good school: Hartsbourne Primary School

Hartsbourne Road, Bushey, Hertfordshire WD23 1SJ

Inspection dates: 4 and 5 May 2022

Outcome

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 at Hartsbourne Primary School behave delightfully. They treat others kindly and try their best. They feel encouraged to achieve house points and the 'learning gems' for demonstrating the school values. Pupils know they must behave politely and eat healthily at lunchtime to be in with a chance to win the coveted 'Clive the Carrot' award.

Pupils enjoy break and lunchtimes where they may explore and play in the pleasant school grounds. Pupils' regular forest school sessions teach them about living things and how to work together to build and create using natural materials. Pupils benefit too from a wide range of extra-curricular clubs, including art, French and tennis, to name but a few.

Pupils are keen to bury their nose in a book because support from staff and parents helps many read widely and often. However, in some other subjects, provision is not as strong.

Pupils of all ages describe what bullying is, but struggle to think of when they or others have experienced it. Pupils say adults are always there when they need help to resolve a problem. As such, pupils feel happy and safe at school.

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

Trustees, governors and school leaders focused on building positive, supportive relationships with staff. They say they did so in light of the pandemic and staff morale. This worked well. All staff say they feel proud to work at the school.

However, in this, leaders at all levels have put significant trust in staff to ensure the quality of education pupils receive is good enough. They do not use staff training and

monitoring well to effect change. This has led to some flaws in curriculum design and school practices.

The school's curriculum, including in the early years, is in development. For some subjects, like reading and mathematics, curriculum plans set out what pupils learn. There is a clear sequence from Reception to Year 6. Most teachers teach content clearly in these subjects. Pupils achieve better in these subjects than in others. For some subjects, leaders only set out broad aims. Teachers then segment these into sequences of learning. Sometimes, where teachers are unclear of what they are teaching, they provide confusing instruction and misguided activities. Some curriculum plans do not set out what children learn in the early years. This makes it difficult for teachers in key stage 1 to help pupils make links to prior learning. As a result, some pupils find it difficult to complete activities and remember information.

Assessment practices are in development for some subjects. Where assessment works well, for example in mathematics, teachers use the 'buffer zone' to check what pupils know. Teachers then arrange lessons to address pupils' misconceptions or they move pupils on to what content comes next. This shows itself in pupils having a stronger recall of key facts. In some other subjects, pupils are not assessed against the knowledge teachers want them to know. Teachers are then not as quick to address pupils' misconceptions.

Although pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities are subject to the same issues in the curriculum, much of the tailored support they receive helps them progress well. Leaders worked wisely to create efficient ways of supporting pupils. Teachers use these to good effect. They identify what support a pupil needs. They then determine what specific, measurable approaches are best. Staff work hard to review support regularly to check it helps the pupil. As required, leaders liaise tenaciously with external agencies to get a pupil any extra support they need. Staff communicate clearly with pupils and their parents throughout these processes.

Across the school, pupils behave sensibly and thoughtfully. Children in the early years are confident, keen learners. This is due to the warm relationships they build with staff. Elsewhere, pupils like opportunities to discuss their learning with staff and peers. They do this courteously, taking turns to speak.

Pupils' personal development is highly valued. Besides the extensive extra-curricular offering, there are responsibilities for pupils to take on. Pupils may effect change in school as a house captain, play leader or school councillor. The personal, social and health education curriculum teaches pupils a wide range of topics in an age-appropriate way. Discussions with pupils show them to be mature, measured, respectful individuals.

In discussion with the headteacher, the inspector agreed that curriculum development, assessment and the effectiveness of leaders' monitoring may usefully serve as a focus for the next inspection.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders ensure staff are suitably trained. Staff say the regular training and bulletins on the staffroom board help them remain vigilant. Staff identify pupils at risk of possible harm confidently and report their concerns quickly. The online reporting system allows for clear communication between leaders and staff. The appropriate staff are kept involved in what support is arranged for vulnerable pupils and their families. Leaders work tirelessly to help ensure vulnerable pupils receive the help they need. Pupils name many adults in school who they may turn to if they have a worry.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Not all curriculum plans set out clearly the knowledge to be learned from Reception to Year 6. Some teachers find it hard to plan sequences of learning with appropriate activities for pupils to complete. As a result, pupils do not achieve as well as they should. Leaders must ensure clear curriculum plans are in place for all subjects, setting out vocabulary and concepts pupils learn from Reception to Year 6.
- For some foundation subjects, teachers assess pupils against broad, subjective statements relating to skills and not the knowledge they aim for pupils to know. This means teachers cannot use assessment information to inform teaching to address any gaps in pupils' knowledge. As a result, some pupils' recall of knowledge is not as strong as it should be. Leaders must devise a system to inform teaching which teachers may use to check what knowledge pupils know.
- Although leaders, including trustees and governors, can evaluate their curriculum and school practices accurately, they do not always work astutely to address issues through timely training and precise monitoring to assure themselves that issues have been resolved. This means that there is variability in how well pupils learn in different subject areas. Leaders must ensure they hold themselves and others to account through a clear system of identifying priorities, arranging training and support, and checking these closely for impact.

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 first section 8 inspection since we judged the predecessor school, Hartsbourne Primary School, to be good in October 2016.

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	145256
Local authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	10227573
Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	204
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Sam Russell
Headteacher	Danielle Harte
Website	www.hartsbourne.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- Hartsbourne Primary School is part of the Bushey St James Trust, having joined in December 2017. When the predecessor school, Hartsbourne Primary School, was last inspected by Ofsted in October 2016, it was judged to be good overall.
- The school uses the services of one alternative education provider. The provider is registered with the school where its executive headteacher is based.
- The school runs its own breakfast club.

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 his evaluation of the school.
- The inspector held meetings with the headteacher, deputy headteacher, assistant headteacher, three trustees and four governors.
- The inspector carried out deep dives in these subjects: reading, mathematics and history. For each deep dive, the inspector discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about

their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. The inspector also listened to a sample of pupils read to a familiar adult.

- To inspect safeguarding, the inspector met with the designated safeguarding lead and deputy designated safeguarding lead to review records. The inspector also met with the office manager to scrutinise the single central record of recruitment and vetting checks. The inspector spoke with trustees, governors, teachers and pupils as well.
- The inspector reviewed a range of other school documentation and policies, including the school improvement plan and minutes of meetings.
- The inspector spent time observing and speaking to pupils, as well as reviewing responses to the pupil questionnaire.
- The inspector gathered parents' views by reviewing the 86 responses and 61 free-text responses submitted to the online survey, Ofsted Parent View.
- The inspector gathered staff members' views by speaking to several of them and reviewing the results of Ofsted's staff survey.

Inspection team

Daniel Short, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

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