

Inspection of a good school: Pirehill First School

Tilling Drive, Walton, Stone, Staffordshire ST15 0AA

Inspection dates: 17 and 18 May 2022

Outcome

Pirehill First School continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils enjoy school. They sing the school song lyrics with enthusiasm and pride: 'We are Pirehill First School, and we stand out from the crowd.' Pupils are proud of the school.

Leaders are ambitious for pupils. Pupils are highly motivated to learn and achieve well. Pupils enjoy lessons and are enthusiastic about learning new things. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are well supported and receive the help they need to succeed.

Pupils behave well. They are polite, kind and respectful. They have a clear understanding of equality and diversity. One pupil said, 'Discrimination does not happen here. It does not matter if you are gay, what religion you are or where you come from – everyone here is treated fairly.' Pupils are happy and feel safe. Pupils say that bullying is rare, but they know they can go to any adult if they have concerns.

Pupils enjoy the wide range of opportunities the school has on offer. They enjoy clubs such as kindness club, knit and natter, art, football and choir. Parents and carers are overwhelmingly positive about the school. A typical parental comment is, 'Pirehill is exceptional. It is supportive because the staff are so kind and caring.'

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

Leaders have developed an ambitious curriculum. They have ensured that the local area is at the heart of pupils' learning. For example, pupils learn about Emma Bridgewater (a local ceramist) and how to make Staffordshire oatcakes. In most subjects, leaders have thought carefully about the precise knowledge and skills they want the pupils to know. In art and design, for example, leaders have clearly mapped out the skills of colour-mixing and tinting across the year groups. However, in a minority of subjects, leaders have not yet set out clearly enough what they want pupils to learn and in what order. In these subjects, pupils find it difficult to recall what they have learned previously over time.

Reading is at the heart of the school's curriculum. Leaders are determined to ensure that all pupils learn to read. Pupils have access to high-quality texts. Children in early years get off to a quick start when learning to read. Phonics is taught well by skilled adults. Pupils read books that are well matched to the letter sounds they have been taught.

Pupils' learning in mathematics is strong. The curriculum is taught in small steps, which allows pupils to securely grasp new concepts. Teachers carefully check what pupils can and cannot do and adapt their teaching accordingly. In early years, children are given many opportunities to practise their new mathematical learning. For example, children counted out the correct number of gold coins to match the 'Jack and the beanstalk' story.

Teachers are ambitious for pupils with SEND. The pupils receive effective support from highly trained adults. Well-chosen resources and bespoke support are used effectively to ensure that pupils who need additional help catch up with their peers.

Teachers use consistent approaches to check what pupils know and remember. They set regular quizzes to help pupils recall what they have learned before. Teachers use this information to ensure that lessons address gaps and misconceptions in learning. However, occasionally, activities do not always support the pupils to learn the intended curriculum well enough. The purpose of activities sometimes lacks clarity, and this means that pupils do not always learn the precise knowledge they should.

The personal, social and health education curriculum helps pupils to know how to keep healthy and safe, including when online. Pupils have a good understanding of fundamental British values. They are tolerant and respectful of others.

Pupils make an active contribution to the school. They value the varied roles and responsibilities they have in school, such as those of play leaders, eco-warriors and the members of the online safety squad. Pupils feel that they have a voice in the school. The active school council meets regularly. Members of the school council talk passionately about how they carried out a questionnaire with pupils about playtimes, and how the responses have led to the school designing and building a new play area.

Staff appreciate the support they receive from leaders and governors. Governors challenge school leaders about new initiatives to ensure that these will not have a detrimental impact on workload. Staff say that leaders listen to their views and they feel valued.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders ensure that safeguarding is a priority. Staff know the pupils and the families well. Leaders are up to date with issues in the local community that may impact on pupils' safety. Leaders work closely with external agencies to ensure that pupils and families get the support they need. All staff are well trained and know the procedures for raising a concern. Pupils feel confident that adults will help them if they need it. Recruitment checks on the suitability of staff are detailed.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In a minority of foundation subjects, leaders have not identified the specific knowledge that pupils need to know and in what order they need to know it. This means that pupils cannot always remember the important learning that leaders want them to. Leaders need to ensure that they identify the precise knowledge pupils need to know in these subjects and the order in which it will be learned.
- Occasionally, the delivery of the curriculum does not always help pupils to learn the knowledge that is intended. This is because some activities are over complex and detract from the learning. Leaders need to support teachers to ensure that the activities support pupils to learn the intended 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 a section 5 inspection immediately.

This is the second section 8 inspection since we judged the school to be good in April 2017.

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	124164
Local authority	Staffordshire
Inspection number	10227080
Type of school	First school
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	5 to 9
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	294
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Susan Crookshank
Headteacher	Karen Williamson-Smith
Website	www.pirehill.staffs.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	26 April 2017, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school uses one registered alternative provider.

Information about this inspection

- This was the first routine inspection the school had 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 met with the headteacher, deputy headteacher, curriculum leaders, the special educational needs coordinator and other members of staff.
- The inspector carried out deep dives in early 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 met with the designated safeguarding lead and checked safeguarding documents, including the checks made on staff. She also examined documentation relating to pupils' attendance and behaviour.

- The inspector considered the responses to Ofsted’s online survey, Ofsted Parent View, and the views of staff and pupils recorded in Ofsted’s online surveys.
- The inspector spoke with the chair of the governing body.

Inspection team

Eve Morris, lead inspector

Her Majesty’s Inspector

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